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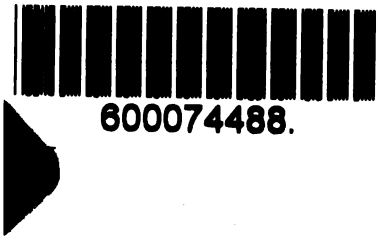
Mira
and
Other Poems.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MIRA,

A Tale:

AND

OTHER POEMS.

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A Tale:

AND

OTHER POEMS.

By B. BURFORD RAWLINGS.

LONDON:
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BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA

ERRATA.

Preface line 3 should read—
" to overestimate its consequence. Should the authorities "

Page 13, line 5, for " their " read *its.*

Page 70, line 9, for " hide " read *hid.*

neglect, or to their encouragement; should they point out a nook in oblivion as the best receptacle for my efforts, or allow that I have taken one step in the direction of merit, I must bow to their decision, but my endeavours will be uninfluenced.

I have ever had an idea that humility and independence may be made to blend, and that neither

ANA. BIBL

PREFACE.

In presenting this little Volume to a public ordeal I attempt neither to underrate the responsibility nor to overestimate its consequence, should the authorities which be, subject it to their adverse criticism, to their neglect, or to their encouragement; should they point out a nook in oblivion as the best receptacle for my efforts, or allow that I have taken one step in the direction of merit, I must bow to their decision, but my endeavours will be uninfluenced.

I have ever had an idea that humility and *independence* may be made to blend, and that neither

need be sacrificed at the other's shrine. It has been the fate of many a better man than myself to fight a hard battle, and often to be crushed in the struggle.

I accept the danger of the position I have ventured upon as I aspire to its reward, and though the present may be treacherous, yet, with the future for an ally, I shall still persevere.

London, January, 1865.

MIRA.

CANTO I.

Of that sweet village—dear familiar spot,
Where my kind Fortune cast my early lot;
Dear little hamlet, its pleasures all its own,
Shut from the seething world, and all alone
I sing; and Memory, faithful, takes me back
To con each scene, and walk each well known track;
Bids me awhile forget the city's riot,
And dream of early peace, and childhood's quiet.
Ah, yes! again I breathe thy fragrant air,
Sweet with the scent a thousand wild flowers bear;

Again through shady lanes I trod of yore
I walk, and long lost thoughts come thickly o'er;
Through the thick maze of youthful hope I rove,
And feel, once more, the thrill of early love!
Yon chimney which emits the circling wreath,
Borne by the wind across the dark brown heath,
Topping the sylvan screen, by Nature dress'd,
Where the wild thrushbeard builds her early nest,
Beckons me home. Oh scene of infant life!
Free from the world, its discord and its strife.
Calm oasis! within the desert placed,
Toward which my ev'ry bond of love is trac'd;
Oh say—what power can my affections kill,
Home of my fathers—thou art my home still.
There stands the little church with ivied tower,
Oft scene of truant thought and restless hour;
Where the good parson strived to urge the sinner,
Whilst we, bad urchins, dream'd of coming dinner.
Yes, there it is, amidst the grassy graves,
A motley group of undulating waves;
Beneath that velvet turf, unconscious lie,
All of the little world's mortality.
Hard by their fathers lived, and they drew breath,
And, with life o'er—'tis there they sleep in death!

And there the village green, that dear old place
Where we competed in the hurdle race,
Played cricket, or at lovely eventide,
When the old chesnuts threw their shadow wide
And the red sun was sinking in the west,
Tinging, with wreaths of gold, each neighb'ring
crest,
And the calm beauties of the waning day
Seemed to invite us to the outdoor play,
With one accord we gathered to the scene,
And merry, I trow, grew that village green;
There, on the rough hewn seats beneath the trees,
The aged rustics took their pleasant ease,
Chatting of bygone times. No envy there
That they had lost their strength, or grown less fair.
Content to see, in some dear form, re-born
Beauties, which graced their own life's sunny morn.
There in a knot, the village matrons stand,
In truth of buxom dames a goodly band,
Scarce owning age—yet, jealous, none the less
All its respect and rev'rence to possess,
From the gay frolic hold themselves aloof
Enjoy the scene, yet try to look reproof;
And here in clust'ring groups, the men of toil,

The swarthy peasants, tillers of the soil,
Hard-handed men, whose hearts are none the worse,
Though the chief victims of the general curse—
Men to whom all romance of life is past,
Fated to toil so long as strength will last,
With hopes, at best, to feed the mouths which crave,
And trust to Heaven's continuing what they have;
A weary life, yet the calm evening bears
Rest to their minds, and healing to their cares.
They love the festive scene, it takes them back
Far, far on Life's rough weatherbeaten track,
And as they hear the ancient fiddler's strain
They'd loose their bonds and join the dance again.
For a short hour, their sober age, their wives,
Their clam'rous little ones, their anxious lives
Should be as myths dissolved. The coming freak
The wives suspect—their faithless mates they seek
With an upbraiding eye. What man could stand
The dazzling weapons of that bonny band;
Each husband quails, and every wedded lord,
Cow'd at the searching glance, sinks overaw'd!
Hark! the first note's vibration strikes the ear,
If music's not, there's much of action here;
The worthy fiddler will no motion shirk,

But makes up what he wants in tune—by work.
Note how he draws that deep bass note—his brow,
Fit sympathetic act—he frowneth now,
And now he smiles, then capers round and round,
Each antic suited to its proper sound,
So thin his frame, it seems a question whether
With all this shaking, he'll long hold together!
And now each love-lorn swain his mistress leads
To the arena of Terpsichorean deeds,
His eyes on ground intent, his throbbing heart
Talks love, and boldly swears "Till death us part."
But his fixed lips refuse to say the word
Which his companion would have gladly heard,
A stolen glance is all he dares. Before
His tongue finds words, his resolution's o'er,
All his well studied speech, his flattery fair,
E'er he can lisp them, vanish into air!
Now, too, coy maidens cast a ling'ring glance
Towards the gay, motley group and merry dance
And wish for partners too; now merry swains,
With smile or frown as earnest for their pains,
Play cunning jokes, and with the waning day
Dancing degenerates to rompish play,
And mystic rings are form'd, and lovers sip

Sweets from their mistress's not unwilling lip;
While the loud shouts of the approving throng
Swell o'er the neighb'ring hills in boist'rous song.

'Twas now, as village legend tells the tale,
When the grey sky reveal'd the starbeams pale,
When the soft moon rose o'er the mountain tops,
And cuckoo warbled in the neighb'ring copse,
When the young peasant, weary of his am'rous freaks,
Bidding the scene farewell, his cottage seeks.
It was then, at that cold, deserted hour,
The lonely maid walk'd by the ruin'd tower,
And wond'rous tales were told of fearful cries,
Of groans, bewailings, and unnatural sighs
Heard by affrighted ears, like sounds they said
Of heart-broke lamentations o'er the dead;
Woe to the luckless soul who found his way
To the old grey tower at the close of day!
Well I remember how my childish breast
Throbbed to the quick, and lost its wonted rest
As ancient Martha, with the subject fired,
Re-told the tale of which we never tired.

To *those old days,* which history's pages

Teach us to look on as the golden ages,
When War was rampant, and Old England spent
Her time in bloody strife and discontent:
When her best manhood went to feed the flood,
And every hand was cursed with stain of blood;
And but to pander to Ambition's taste
Her homes and hearths were desolate and laid waste;
To these she led us with loquacious pride,
And many turnings of the subject, wide
Imagination to new traits gave birth;
Now she drew tears, and now she kindled mirth,
'Till with one bold and comprehensive bound,
Again she trod the old, familiar ground;
Her sharp-toned voice, the selfsame notes ran o'er,
Thrilling our hearts as oft they'd thrilled before!

Hard by the shadows of the old grey tower
Some ivied ruins formed a tempting bower
Secure from view—for lovers' talk 'twas made—
So sweet its precincts and so dark its shade;
No grosser sound came there than wild birds' cry,
Or branches waving in the night wind's sigh,
Or distant peal from village belfry borne,
Or echoes of the cheery hunter's horn,

Or the low music of the giddy brook,
Which o'er the crags and rocks its lone way took.
'Twas there one summer's eve—when sinking sun
Told that another day its course had run,
And the wild foxglove, thyme, or fragile rose
Drank in the dew and went to calm repose,—
A beauteous maid reclined; her fairy head
Resting on a purple violet bed;
Whilst her thick golden hair sweet contrast made,
A ray of sunshine, 'midst the dark wood's shade.
Hers was the graceful form, ethereal, light—
Symmetry's self, draped in virgin white,
With Modesty—her only ornament—
Fair jewel, which more brilliant radiance lent
Than diamond, to sweeter bloom gave birth
Than brightest ruby, dug from deepest earth!
And now the village clock, in distance heard,
Joins in a concert with some lonesome bird,
And chimes the trysting hour. Fair Mira starts,
With joyous throb; whilst toward the glade she darts
A glance expectant. Fresh feminine grace,
Rose with the flush upon the maiden's face,
And in her trembling form new beauty shone,

Enchanting more; because 'twas nature's own.
Nor had she long to wait; scarce had the sound
Of the old bell repeated echo found,
Or her endeavour her thrill'd breast to cheat
Into composure, and still her heart's loud beat
Made triumph; then with impatient stride,
Aubrey had bounded to his mistress' side.
Woman's beauty and manly grace had met;
Her charms asked charms, and Aubrey paid the debt.
He like some noble lion—she gentler dove—
He gave a man's, and she a woman's love;
Fierce passion one, as mighty torrent strong,
Which brook'd no stop, but carried all along;
Gratified or curbed in its ambition,
Might lead to Heaven, or hurl him to perdition;
And hers the softer, unobtrusive flame,
Less passionate, and yet its power the same.
Confiding, trusting, innocent, supreme,
Life of her day and idol of her dream;
A seed sown deep, which, putting forth its root,
Struck kindly soil, and blossomed into fruit.

Now Aubrey, in the transports of love's bliss,
'Prints on fair Mira's cheek a greeting kiss;

No coquetry to turn her lovely face
From the sweet rapture of his warm embrace;
Conscience too pure reproachful dart to aim,
For shameless thoughts, oft herald sense of shame.
And there they stood, calm—happy—hand-in-hand,
While the soft vesper breeze their faces fanned;
Her dainty head had gone to quiet rest
On the broad surface of his manly breast,
In sweet assurance. Her liquid eyes
O'erflowing happiness to his bronzed cheek rise,
And read his look of love, then far above,
Praying Heaven's blessing on their earnest love!
Then Aubrey the short, happy silence broke
With sound of words, and thus to Mira spoke:
"Dear love, six months, six golden months have fled
Since with a thrill of rapturous bliss I read
Thy love reciprocate—told my passion,
And bade thee mould me to thy own heart's fashion,
Poured forth my tale of love, all undismayed!
With power increased as it had been delayed.
You heard me patiently, of months of care,
Of hope which budded, but to bloom despair;
Of fears incurred, and joy which shone awhile,
Bred in some winning word, or kindly smile,
Caught by my anxious mind and magnified

To meaning foreign, then dashed aside;
Joy which scarce formed, had found an early tomb,
Smothered, alas! in the succeeding gloom.
All this I told, and soaring far above
An idle play, your soul confessed its love,
Owned I was dear, and with such tender word
So softly whispered, yet so clearly heard,
I felt a nobler purpose, loftier aim,
And stronger aspirations o'er me came;
I read thy heart, so maidenly, so pure,
Its love so deepsown, changeless, and secure;
The moment opportune, for good fruit bore
Thenceforth, please Heaven, I would deserve thee more!"
He paused: and for his haughty manhood's sake
Made the fierce effort man must always make
To stem emotion—essayed, but failed to speak,
Whilst a big tear rolled down his olive cheek.
"What ails thee, Aubrey?" his companion cried,
And crept her closer to her lover's side,
"What weighty grief is this which wafts a sigh,
And bids the tear drop dim thy lustrous eye?
Tell me," she pleaded, "of the grief you bear,
And let me, sweetheart, in your sorrow share.

Say not 'tis trouble you must bear alone,
Born in your heart and there to live unknown;
Rather let trouble bind us more together,
As flocks herd close in threatening weather."
" Sweet one," replied the other, whilst a thrill
Of passion seemed his spacious soul to fill,
" No secret thought is here of joy or grief,
Of bitter apprehension or relief,
No hidden danger mine wherewith to cope,
Or aspiration of a future hope,
But thou hast shared it; yet to foretell
A trouble which ere long thou'lt know too well,
And throw a shadow o'er thy young heart's bliss,
Would 'twere ordained for any tongue but this!
Six months of love, of pleasure unalloyed,
Wherein two kindred souls have met and joyed
In sweet affection—oh! ye too happy hours,
How soon o'er thy bright joys the black cloud lowers!"
" Dear Aubrey," answered Mira, who had read
His look of woe, and felt the anxions dread
Of apprehension, " say what words are these
Which chill my soul and bid my life blood freeze,
What black cloud, love, what new created care

Rankles thy breast where peace and comfort were?
Tell me its import, soothe my dread alarm,
Say thou art true, and bid my soul be calm!
Stay, I have wrong'd thee, yet who can hold
The reins of thought, and keep their course controll'd?
Forgive me, sweetheart, for the doubt I bore,
Good, gentle Aubrey, I'll offend no more!"
"Even as poison on the arrow tip
So works the malice of the human lip,
And easy 'tis," said Aubrey, "jealous dove,
To cure the wounds brought forth of anxious love,
Yet fear not, Mira, though report has aim'd
Slander at man, and he is fickle nam'd,
Think me the rule's exception—what you will,
Only believe this heart beats constant still."

Happy was Mira. As the bleating dam
Fondles the refound joy, the straying lamb;
Or fearful hen bird, flutt'ring to her nest,
Finding her young in their unbroken rest,
Sends notes of gladness through the echoing wood,
And covers with her wing the treasur'd brood;
Or widow'd mother in her lonely home,
Who has heard the tale of the wild wave's foam,

The howling tempest and the night clouds dark,
And waters which closed o'er a foundering bark,
Changes her sobs to the teardrops of joy,
And clasps to her heart her saved sailor boy:
So Mira nursed her love, the much more dear,
That Fear had whispered its decay was near!
"Oh, Aubrey, I am yours—you mine—'till Death
Shall still this beating pulse, and stay this breath;
We are each others' all—nor seek to know
Of joys but those two loving hearts bestow.
Did'st thou not say so, when thy love confessed
With me alone, thy soul could call life blest?
Why grieve then, dearest? Has the heartless world
One stone of Malice at thy soft heart hurled?
I'll love thee more! is poverty thy woe?
I'll be more rich in love; then let grief go:
Let love destroy it ere its power's begun,
Dispersed as mist before the rising sun.
Let us forget the clouds and strive to live
In the bright rays which Love alone can give."
"Oh balmy words!" cried Aubrey, "shadowing power
Of love surviving e'en the parting hour;
They bid my wounded spirit mourn no more,
And my sad soul to plume her wings and soar

To the bright, golden future, Fate ordains
To recompense us for our present pains.
Sweet Mira! darling of my heart, no rhyme
Can tell the poesy of this dear time;
No painter's hand pourtray an atmosphere
So roseate as that our souls breathe here.
Fragrant with love! Away ye doubts and fears,
And cease to flow, oh ye too ready tears;
Here we will sip the sweets no pain alloys,
And lose our present grief in future joys."
And then he told her, how for country's sake,
And for those ties, all else is too weak to break,
He must give up his home, his love, his all,
For present time, and at firm Duty's call
Forsake the paths of peace for battle's strife,
And if need be, surrender up his life.
"Yet," said he, "darling, feel no dread alarm,
Come rest thy trembling form upon my arm;
I feel a something here," he struck his breast,
"Which bids me 'go thy way in hopeful rest,
Assured of future joy.' Oh Mira fair!
I live the future now; come with me, there;
I see it all, mine is a bright renown,
With honours, riches, and a laurel crown;

Whilst bright as rays of early spring-time's sun,
Shines happy consciousness of duty done;
And there—oh sweetest joy of all beside,
I see thee, partner of my home, my bride."

The words of consolation found no place
In Mira's heart; but in her bloodless face
Dire grief sat throned. Grim monarch he,
In all his unrelenting majesty!
He paled her cheek, damming the crimson blood
As a huge rock might stem a mountain flood;
Charged her soft eyes with an unearthly glare,
And fixed their glance in an unmeaning stare!
Then passion with an overwhelming rush,
No will could stay, and no remonstrance hush,
Swept through her heart, and found its vent in words,
Sad as the screech of night's ill-omened birds.
"Would that this day, or I, had never known
The sense of being. Henceforth life's light has flown,
And day is turned to night—a dark blank scroll—
Death warrant to the yearnings of my soul,
Obstructs my vision, with a dreadful truth
Of smothered joys and solitary youth.

No sun shall ever rise again on me,
Nor music soothe me with sweet harmony,
All nature shall enhance the grief I bear,
And sympathy increase my weight of care;
Each word I hear shall aggravate the wound,
And sorrow bud, where'er I tread the ground.
Aubrey, I read the future too, and see
A form that writhes in its death agony."
"No, no," he interrupted, "say not so,
Nor chill the blood, that will so hopeful flow;
Swear you will love me still, though distance hide,
And separation raise a barrier wide!
Swear you'll still thrill at sound of Aubrey's name,
Though he be treading the far road to fame!"
Changed the relations were betwixt the twain—
The damsel grief struck, comforter the swain;
No art he spared to stay her troublous moan,
And in her grief forgot to feel his own!
"You bid me love, oh! though your bidding came
Conjuring me to hate, it were the same.
One seed of love, sown in a woman's soul,
Grows wondrously, and permeates the whole;
Its spreading roots to myriads more give birth,
Till love lives everywhere in plant and earth.

Yet as the thriving tree may droop and die
'Neath the harsh trial of a rainless sky,
So the fond heart may wither and decay
When its chief nourishment has passed away.
Hope is the food of Love—if Hope's not there
The thoughts dwell less on Love than on Despair!"

And so, with mournful converse and slow pace—
Grief at their heart, and sorrow in their face,
They left the wooded vale, the verdant grove,
Where they had whispered forth their tales of love;
Each well known spot receding from their view,
Seemed to be bidding them a sad adieu.
No more at eve, should warbling bird intone
Its treble to the vows the past had known;
No more should gentle breezes bear along,
Faint echoes of their happy trysting song;
Or setting sun, shed down his golden gleam,
On hearts so light, they scarce revealed his beam!
Up to the cottage porch, where spreading yew
Had heard the pair so oft their vows renew;
As in a long embrace, they each retain
The form they part from, but to meet again.
Now changed the scene, to what an altered hue!

A last embrace! till time they neither knew!
Perchance long years, perchance, so sighed Despair,
Never again, the twain should fondle there!
With heaving hearts, they on the threshold dwell,
Know they must part—yet dread to say—"Farewell."

Their hearts were full; nor could they keep at bay
The crushing grief, which held triumphant sway;
They spoke no word—of what avail was speech
To soothe a woe no sympathy could reach?
As woman he—his manly heart unstrung—
She, in her anguish, on his bosom hung.
Her woe was food for his, whereon he fed,
Moistened with tears, his soul blush'd not to shed.
One more "Good bye;" once more her form he pressed
In frantic passion to his love-sick breast;
One more fond kiss, and then with nervous haste,
He seized her passive hand, and on it placed
A ring of curious make; no second such
Had left the worker's hand, resembling much
Antique design, and words thereon were writ,
Pledge earnest of my love—"I will redeem it."
No more of hesitation—all was done,
Ere Mira comprehended, he was gone!

Was it a wild bird sang, or voice which cried,
A curse on Aubrey's love—his new pledged bride?
Some sound there was, which from the black shade
came,
Shadowing forth a vengeance on her name;
But they, too much in parting pangs engrossed,
Heeded it not, and so its sting seemed lost.
Thus was the parting made, and thus once more
Were two hearts severed, as too oft before!
Aubrey had gone, yet Mira still stood there
With the bright moonbeams playing o'er her hair.
And leafy shadows dancing weirdly part,
Emblems of darker shades upon her heart.
Lost in a maze of grief so dark and thick,
Sense reeled, and Reason's self grew sick.
Gone! What agony oft dwells beneath that word,
Entreaties coined to dissolve unheard,
Showered forth as offspring of an ailing mind,
To be but scattered by the passing wind!
Gone! Aye gone for ever! for she felt too well
Her last "Good bye" had been a life's farewell;
She'd looked her last upon that noble face,
Felt his last throb—returned his last embrace;
And when the measure of her grief she drank

Without an effort, 'neath its weight she sank.
Thus 'tis, when grief too cruel sceptre wields,
His triumph's short,—exhausted Nature yields.

There came a sound upon the fresh night wind,
A cry—a scream—a laugh—or all combined;
And like some beast, whom instinct spurs to lay
In ambush, hastens to secure his prey,
A form advances from the wooded shade,
The moon shines forth and shows a gipsy maid.
Oh, why that scowl, that look of vengeance there
Upon a face that else had been so fair?
Why clench those fingers thus, why flash those eyes?
'Tis angels' beauty wrapt in fiends' disguise!
Like some sweet landscape by a tempest torn
Plucked of the beauties in the sunshine worn,
Still keeps the form which brighter hours have known,
Though the pervading loveliness has flown!
One moment Cythrine silent gazed—the next
She utterance found, and jealousy the text
Whereon she discoursed, whilst in turn the air
Bore words of love, hate, vengeance, and despair!

Oh, *Hate, thou tempter*, cause of worst of sins,

Satan may sleep when once thy reign begins;
Fitly allied thou art, alas! too well
Thy forces range upon the side of hell!
A furious host, all clam'rous in their haste,
To wreck the heart and lay Love's valleys waste.
'Twas Hate taught Cythrine's heart to know
Those thoughts and passions which in fiends' veins
flow,—
'Twas Hate's dark, black and murd'rous flood
O'erflowed her soul and made her thirst for blood;
Rival she was who lay unconscious there,
So much more rival that she looked so fair.
Seductive vengeance, well-displayed her powers,
Bade her remember all her jealous hours,
Recalled the lingering days of hopeless pain
Spent since she'd loved—to learn she loved in vain!
Yet she restrained her hand, her woman's heart
Revolted, ere it played a murd'rer's part;
She wavered, then recoiled and turned to flee,
Hoping by flight to set the tempter free,
But ere her purpose its fulfilment brought,
Dire Hate repulsed again the victory sought;
He, schooled to vanquish, knew too well how frail
Is man!—how soon his resolutions fail,

And gathering strength with each renewed attack,
Soon turned the tide of doubtful victory back.
Dark hopes they were which rose in Cythrine's thought,
Darker and blacker even than blood had taught,
She that repelled, aghast, the bloody goal,
Now planned, content, the ruin of a soul!
She plucked the trinket Aubrey's hand had placed—
Betrothal's token—with a trembling haste,
Then fled the scene, afraid the injured one
Who slept unconscious, to awake undone,
Should waking, scan, and know her rival form,
And thus, forewarned, avert the coming storm.

When schooled by Custom and rein'd in by Shame
The heart attempts to hide the tender flame;
How vain the effort—too ambitious height,
As well aspire to veil the noonday light;
Each crack and crevice of the soul will show
The fire which burns in hopeless flame below,
And language fails to tell the secret more
Than the heart's self has oft betrayed before.
'Twas Cythrine's lot to feel a love which burn'd
The fiercer that its throbs were unreturned,

To know the agony, all else above—
The blank despair of unrequited love;
Her nature all untutor'd, restless, wild,
With Impulse for a guide, her own spoilt child,
She tried no art to hide the love she bore,
And when most hopeless, then she loved the more.
Yet to paint woman, without any shame,
Were too gross scandal on her brightest fame,
Pluck Modesty from woman's graces, where
Shall flower be found which wears a tint as fair?
Withdraw its purity from woman's mind,
And what perfume so sweet is left behind?
Woman must love—as 'twas of old, so still;
For rolling years no germs of nature kill;
Affection buds where'er its seeds are cast,
All hallowed, or with infamy to blast!
A cynic world soars its own crimes above,
And cries most vengeance on some erring love!
Often had Cythrine all unnoticed sped
Through the bye paths which to the ruins led,
And watched with starting orbs the loving pair
Who thought but solitude and they were there,
Had seen the greeting, with its warm embrace,
The love blush settling on the maiden's face,

Had almost felt the breath which laden came,
Breathing another and more favor'd name!
Then the hot blood streams to her temples rushed,
Conviction came, and shame would not be hushed.
She fled the scene her soul refused to bear,
And tried to hate the love she could not share,
To tear the image from her breast and break
The heart which dared the resolution make.
Presumptuous pride! Soon melts thy lofty dream,
An hour's fierce fight left Love again supreme.

CANTO II.

Of deadly sins, the worst are those which wear
An outside gloss, which bids men count them fair;
Thus war—dark, hideous, treach'rous fiend,
Suckled on blood and never to be weaned;
Dressed in the pomp and grandeur it displays,
Bids man admire, and foolish man obeys.
Its sick'ning horrors fade at Glory's call,
And man's content that Fame should hide them all!
The world's applause! intoxicating drain!
One draught of which but makes man thirst again.
Ambition's hope! Once victor of the day,
And what can stem the tide—what power can stay?
Borne onward on the rapid, giddy stream,
And lost to all but the recurring theme;

Victim of envy, rage, and deadly strife,
Nought can allay, and ending but with life;
With the sly tempter he forbears to cope,
Surrend'ring present peace and future hope!

No wavering Aubrey, now; the worst had passed—
The Rubicon was crossed—the die was cast;
The love he felt, chief weakness' source before,
Now strengthened him to victory the more.
He who fortells but woe's the worst of seers,
And he worst coward, who the future, fears;
That is the soul, by Nature worst endowed,
Which strains its eye to catch a coming cloud.
Ill omen'd man! What were more cruel curse
Than with each trouble to foresee a worse;
As when the sun sends forth its morning light,
To scan the west and sigh o'er coming night!

The Battle's Eve! Upon the neighbouring height,
Hidden beneath the canopy of night,
The foe lies close—his sentries' watchful eyes
Scanning the night, must guard against surprise;
And cast suspicious glance where clearly shine
The ruddy camp fires of the English line;

There, too, the army sleeps and dreams away
The night, with thoughts of the to-morrow's fray;
Whilst some rough dreamers raise their voices high
In honour of triumphal victory.
For he who dreams of deadly battles' strife,
Of bloody slaughter, and of wasted life
Ne'er dreams defeat, nor sees a western sun
Set on the glories of the victory won!
And some there were whose errant thoughts would roam
To the old place—the dear familiar home.
Where the hoarse din of war, the battles' roar
Gave place to peace and filled their ears no more.
A mother hung upon their necks and wept
Tears of thanksgiving to the God who kept
The murderous missile from its deadly part,
Restored a son, and saved a broken heart.
Here a fond wife, the grizzled sleeper sees,
And tiny forms come creeping on his knees.
He hears their voices as they lisp to greet,
Their childish tones so innocently sweet;
They call him "Father;" ah! what pleasure this—
What earthly joy can equal parents' bliss?
See how the tears roll down the roughened face—

Not bred of grief, or bearing Sorrow's trace ;
But like the ethereal rainbow's born
Of sunshine laughing, and of clouds which mourn.
Glad smiles play on the glistening tears which fall,
And happy radiance suffuses all !
So 'tis weak man's poor nature to employ
Emblems of grief to picture forth his joy !
Alas ! that e'er the primal greeting's o'er,
The scene recedes, the transient ray's no more,
And with the morning's first returning gleam
The soldier wakes to find his home a dream !

'Twas now Light's guard advanced, the earliest ray
Proclaimed the advent of the opening day,
And bade black Night her sable sceptre yield
To leave her rival, master of the field.
The camp lay still until the horn's shrill blast
Told the tired sleepers that rest's hour was pass'd.
The fires which erstwhile had so brightly burn'd,
Grew dimly pale, or sickly colours turn'd ;
For as a feeble mind ne'er shows a spark
Of sense, unless surrounding minds are dark,
The flames which rise so proudly in the night,
Sink low, dismay'd, and cower before the light.

And now, all indistinct, against the grey
Of morn, a figure picked her lonely way.
She bore no charms upon her wither'd face,
But weight of years, without old age's grace.
Nature had made no claim for rev'rence there,
No kindly glance, no smile, no snowy hair;
But in her restless eye a strange light shone,
Telling of dark humanity alone!
No faltering pace a lengthy past betray'd,
Her wish said "Haste," and well her limbs obey'd;
Her step so soft, the early bird who sung
His carollay ne'er stopped; the dew which hung
In silvery drops upon each verdant blade
Scarce broke beneath the footprints that she made.
Strange contradictions these, for age, strange guise,
A wither'd frame, yet no infirmities.
Say, was she woman? Though she trod the earth,
Had other worlds been witness to her birth?
But hark! she mutters—but one word,—'tis this,
"Revenge!" and once again her pale lips hiss
"Revenge!" 'Tis all! Enough, the tale is whole,
See, the dread hope runs riot of her soul.
All other thoughts have poison'd been, then died,
And for revenge she forfeits all beside!

And so she speeds. The sentries' wakeful eye,
Never notes her comimg, and she passes by.
No askance in her glance, no fear she's seen,
Her look resolved, yet unconcerned her mien;
She threads the camp, with ne'er a faltering face,
As one well used its tangled paths to trace;
And in the dim twilight, the morning haze,
Her form grows hidden in the tented maze.

Beneath a rough, rude covering which scarce stayed
Heaven's dews, but tatters, not a few betrayed,
Gathered in varied scene, 'neath every clime,
Products of burning sun, wind, rain, and time,
Aubrey lay sleeping—as pillow for his head
A mossy stone—and the hard ground his bed.
Yet on his manly face Contentment beamed,
And slumber soft as down—he slept and dream'd.
His was the dream of love, that old, old tale,
Which firm as earth itself, shall never fail
To gild life's clouds with ever brilliant rays,
And lend enchantment to its darkest days.
Oh, dream on, Aubrey, live each golden hour,
Paint the familiar scene, the ivied tower;
The violet bank, the feathered choir above,

Retrace the blissful past of hope and love!
Hang on each smile, re-utter every word
Thy tongue hath spoken, or thy ear hath heard;
Dream on! fair youth, were faith, as love set fast,
Did hope survive, when even faith had past.
Oh happier world! could love her powers dispose
To yield a cure for self-inflicted woes.

Betwixt the form recumbent and the sky,
No introduction but a stifled sigh;
Motionless and expectant, there she stood,
Her soul still feasting on the self-same food,
The weirdly stranger—still she ate the meat
And drank the waters—to Hate's spirit sweet;
Of dire revenge! and on her lip a smile,
Not innocent, but fraught with deadly guile.
Her raven eye flashed fire, her cheek was dyed
With the bright flush of hatred gratified;
Love's dream grew dim, and with a sigh
Aubrey awakened to reality.
No more such bliss for him; life's hope was past,
Henceforth all must be cloudy, overcast;
For as the happy fiction passed away,
Revenge broke bounds, and fastened on its prey;

Yet she struck not at once, but efforts made
To stem the rage that brook'd not being stayed;
But shone in every feature, every look,
And bared her ranks, ere ambush she forsook;
Her thoughts were malice, and her hopes were dark—
Dark as the night, without one starry spark,
But for her words—they borrowed trappings wear;
Soft is their tone, and to the senses fair;
She'd reach his soul, and then she'd sting him there!

"Fond youth! upon thy opening orbs I see
The lingering brightness of sweet ecstacy;
Thy dreams are dreams of love—of joys untold,
Of worlds unreal, and palaces of gold;
Where the bright, grateful sun no setting knows,
Nor lights one sorry scene of human woes;
Where fitful Fate ne'er casts one glance unkind,
Nor tempest breaks, nor bursts the wintry wind;
But zephyrs, soft as summer breathings, rove,
Sweet with the scent of all-pervading Love!"
"Good mother!" answered Aubrey, with surprise
Tinging his cheek and beaming from his eyes:
"Granted you read my mind aright, and tell
Thoughts my own heart re-beats and knows too well,

Why seek'st thou me? Art thou some gipsy hag
Bent on the search, where footsteps never lag
The search for gold? Come set thy mystic spell,
And if thou showest me good, I'll pay thee well!"
"Youth has its follies," the Unknown replied;
"Nor must Old Age alway descend to chide;
Yet know, profane, in gold lies not the charm
To good create, or manufacture harm;
'Tis mine the passing scene to show—disclose;
'Tis Heaven's alone to make man's joys or woes!"
"Forgive me, Stranger," Aubrey said; "if I
In my own haste, forget thy dignity;
But tell me, can thy art pretend the power
To show a distant scene—the passing hour?
Canst thou forbid yon horizon to screen,
And say to the lost English shore, "Be seen?"
Make the far distance all its treasures bare,
And from the morning vapour—misty air—
Make forms complete, or stay the rising wind,
And fashion it to those I left behind?"
At this the Stranger bent below to hide
A 'vengeful scowl, then rose and thus replied,—
"'Tis nought that thou canst see; none but my eyes
Can distance bridge, or pierce her thick disguise;

But tell me whom thy soul would seek, and know
All thou would'st learn, and all my art will show!"
"Nay, but good mother, if thou can'st pourtray
A scene invisible, and chase away,
By a mere waving of some magic wand,
The land, the sea, and much that lies beyond!
Can'st thou not pierce this feeble fleshy maze,
And bid my soul lie open to thy gaze?"
"Aubrey, I read"——
"Ha! 'tis one proof thy claim
Is founded on a truth—thou knowest my name!"
"Small cause for wonderment; thy name, 'tis nought!
'Tis mine to read each pulse and probe each thought;
My eyes can wander to the form you see,
She, whom thy soul devours in ecstacy;
Not from remembrance paint; but at this hour
Survey her charms, nor ask a memory's power!"
"Enough!" cried Aubrey, with impatience' trace
Writ on each line of his expectant face;
"But tell me how she fares, submits, endures,
And Heaven's best blessings be accounted yours!"

"Oh, Youth! how are thy soul's best longings wove
Into one endless tangled skein of love!

Love, happy, lasting, blissful and supreme,
No trouble's shadow dimming thy fair dream;
Soon shalt thou learn 'tis Love's too oft to sow
Less germs of brightest joy, than darkest woe!"
Thus the Unknown replied. So low each word
Though her tongue spoke—'twas she alone who heard
Strange was the scene, as with an upturned glance
No mummery could impress nor form enhance;
Upon her face—all else within the shade,
The first red gleam of hastening sunlight played
Its ghastly fire, and flick'ring through the mist
Lent lurid pallor to the face it kissed.
She stood; and then outstretching far her arm,
Bade the spell work, and woo'd the mystic charm!

Three minutes of suspense! suspense so strong
The minute seemed an hour—the hour too long.
Three little fragments! yet in Aubrey's breast
The hopes and fears of lingering years were pressed.
He fixed his eyes upon the stranger pale,
Beseech'd, implored, that she would tell her tale,—
"I see," was the mysterious one's reply,
"A maiden in a restless slumber lie;
Her form a Venus, and her skin as fair,

Her dimpling cheeks the softest rose tints wear;
Her hair as purest gold, and every tress
Revelling in enchanting carelessness!"
"'Tis she—'tis Mira!" Aubrey cried; "I trace
Her winning self in each accorded grace.
Unrivall'd Mira! 'twould be cruel wrong
To think such charms to other forms belong.
No imagery could thy deserts outpaint,
Far less of woman than thou art of saint!"
"Praise not too much," the Hag replied, again
Her voice assuming tones of honest pain.
Upon her face dire Malice sat enthroned,
And well belied the grief her tongue entoned:
"Who could outrun the truth? as well reprove
My soul itself for its unbounded love.
I read her heart, which clear as crystal shows,
This tongue reveals, but what this conscience knows."
"Would'st thou accord that praise," say Aubrey, say—
"Did my poor art a shade of doubt display,
A wavering love, or treach'rous heart reveal,
Or on her plighted troth set falsehood's seal?"
"Impossible!" cried Aubrey; "would'st thou dare
To cast the shade with nought of substance there?
To give the wound no medicine can cure;

Nor man's, nor angel's fame, unscathed endure?
I tell thee, woman—witch—whate'er thou art,
Thank well thy sex for its protective part;
Were it a man respired that sland'rous breath,
'Twere his or mine to woo an early death."
"I care not for thy threats. Know, fiery youth,
My mission's not for joy or pain—but truth.
I can no more; if thou hadst heard me, well;
Thy choice is ign'rance—I recall the spell;
Thy anger I forgive, and—fare-thee-well."
"Nay, stay and tell me more—I bid thee stay,
Confirm thy words or chase this doubt away;
If I have err'd in haste, misunderstood,
And dealt thee evil when thou mean'st me good,
This my excuse,—My nature human, weak,
Coerc'd my ready tongue and made it speak."
At this the Stranger turned, and Aubrey eyed
In silence for awhile, then thus replied,—
"I read the human heart, can probe the soul,
And know how both resent the mind's control;
Throw off the bonds they feel, but will not own,
And act, speak, think, from pure impulse alone.
Far better this, than acting double part,
A flatt'ring speech, and an unfaithful heart;

Deceit may flourish, unobserved awhile,
A scowl be cloak'd beneath the brightest smile.
The calmest eve precedes a tempest's throes,
A noxious worm infest the sweetest rose;
From the most verdant shrub a tiger spring,
The direst hate lie 'neath the wedding ring.
The fairest forehead hide the brains which bear
Embryo deeds which only devils dare,
And 'neath the bosom, white in Nature's dress,
The darkest hopes roll onward to success."
'Twas little Aubrey heard—far, far from thence,
Bound in the darkest thraldom of suspense;
He writh'd and fought—in vain he sought relief
In incoherent, rambling disbelief,
Or lighted on affection's proof; in vain
He heard her tell her tale of love again.
The doubt was born—and with its earliest breath
Peace fled undone, and found a troubled death!

"I see her once again," the stranger said,
Whilst mocking lines about her cold lips played;
"There is a flush indignant on her cheeks
She motions in her sleep—she dreams—she speaks!
'No, tell me not of *him*, I love no more;

That has all passed away—dissolv'd, gone o'er;
Where is the plighting ring? the ring he gave?
Ha! ha! I flung the symbol of a slave
To the winds—the mocking winds—see! see!
I have it not—'tis gone—and I am free!'"
"Base fiend," cried Aubrey, "wilt thou tell, forsooth
The foulest lies, and charge them to thy truth?
Though thou shouldst swear it, and thy tongue
Doubly reiterate this cruel wrong,
I'll not believe; yet stay, one proof accord
That I may drive thee hence, or take thy word.
If thou canst read, decipher, understand,
Acts done, words spoken, in an unseen land;
Wilt thou not to my eyes—one poor proof bring,
Shew me—I ask no more—she spurns that ring."
"Oh! Obstinacy's self, must I descend
To pander to thy disbelief, defend
Veracity, because thou keepest aloof,
And scorn'st belief, 'till I award a proof?
Then know that I, who can seer's art betray,
Have power to chase such stubborn doubts away;
There is the proof," and as she spoke she threw
The token—Aubrey saw enough—he knew!
Scarce had her words, in venom'd haste, found vent,

Than a discordant yell of triumph rent
The sullen air, and as the shriek still rung,
And echo its succeeding echoes flung;
A hundred cries receding far and less,
Swept the huge camp, invading each recess,
To be hurl'd back from all its breadth, and length
In fiercer clamour and fresh gathered strength.
Oh murky atmosphere! oh blood-red air!
Down, down to Hades, and yet ling'ring there;
And still that shriek of triumph reigneth o'er
The camp, hill, vale, 'til Aubrey hears no more!

Slowly awaking from unconscious rest,
He left the ground his trem'lous form had pressed;
Oh hideous dream! yet no, his heart well knew
The dream how real, the agony how true!
His hand still grasp'd the ring—oh fatal ring
Before whose advent Hope's last breath took wing,
And left the soul, so barren, torn and bare,
Nothing took root or flourished but Despair!
How oft a woman's nature seeks repose,
In records of her griefs, her pangs, her woes;
And leaning on some sympathising breast,
Forgets her pain, and bids her sorrow rest.

Scarce so with man; his trouble is his own,
Lock'd in his heart, to gnaw and wound unknown;
O'er his fierce grief he proudly seeks control,
Nor tells his woe to any but his soul!
So Aubrey, when no other ear could reach,
Gave sorrow words, and lamentation speech.

"Frail woman! tell my weary spirit whether
Beauty and virtue can survive together;
Or if fair face must hide false heart within,
As deadliest reptiles bear the brightest skin.
I dream'd, vain thought! I'd search'd that mine
Where the heart's passions joy, and longings pine;
Methought that pleasures of true love I'd found,
Like richest gems within the deepest ground.
False hope! The love that shower'd perfume so sweet
Was but a baseless vapour, counterfeit;
Oh, falser Mira! than words can express,
Would I had known thee more, or loved thee less.
See from my bosom I thine image tear,
Henceforward I forget such throbbings were;
And as I crush this trinket with my foot,
So I my former love destroy—outroot;

And break each bond my trusting heart has worn,
Flinging thee back thy hate with fiercest scorn."

"Yet 'twas the budding Spring time of love's
power,
When sunshine alternates with balmy shower;
My love, too fresh and green to court belief,
Thine could have fallen to the 'yellow leaf,'
Which tells of dissolution—untoward haste!
First verdant spring, and then a wintry waste;
No glorious summer, when affection's power
Bears gen'rous fruit, which ripens with the hour.
No golden autumn, with its goodly train
Of mellow'd leaf and virtuous grain;
No note of warning that the end was near,
Of Hope, Joy, Love, and all man's heart holds dear.
Just as the seaman's dread the fierce cyclone,
Heralds its coming with its own sad moan;
One ruthless blast swept o'er the busy deck,
And nought remains but a poor shatter'd wreck."

There is a strong, an agonising grief,
Whereto no tear can minister relief;
Scorching, consuming ev'ry vital part,

Firing the blood and withering the heart!
Mocking at Hope and goading man to dare,
Even death's self, and it is called Despair!
This was the grief which burned in Aubrey's breast,
Furrow'd his weary soul and laughed at rest.
The man strove hard within him to be free,
To hide the wound and gain supremacy;
Pride lent his forces on the hard fought field,
He could not conquer, yet he scorned to yield!
And oft, when sorrow reached her fiercest height,
Pride swept the scene with a resistless might;
His fiery legions carried all before,
And Aubrey cried that he would love no more!
Yet though the flag of victory wave above
A ruined soul, and she forgets her love;
Shall ground so barren bring forth goodly seeds,
And fructify contentment whilst it bleeds?
Oh direful struggle! oh too bloody strife,
The victor shall be Death—the vanquished Life!

The eager army in war's rank arrayed,
A fierce impatience for the fight displayed;
Each hopeful brain its aspirations nursed,
And future brilliancies of arms rehearsed.

O'er every cheek the flush of valor rose,
And every heart beat fast to meet its foes;
The very horses felt the general glow,
And snuff'd the air and gallop'd to and fro,
Bearing their riders with instructions round,
Nor scarcely deign'd to press the grassy ground!
On the dull air hung the first cannon's boom,
Whilst the first souls went headlong to their doom;
From rank to rank a shout defiant sped,
As the glad tidings, "the foe moves," was spread.
Unfurl the battle flags, nor hide them more,
'Till their devices have been dripp'd in gore—
'Till they have seen yon foe swept from the field,
And gain'd the lustre blood alone can yield;
Bray forth ye trumpeters! nor spare your throats,
But fire the army with your deaf'ning notes;
Ye drums! beat notes of glory, fiercely roll,
And spur the soldier to fair Victory's goal.
Crush thought, hide visions of a bloody grave,
And float bright laurels to inspire the brave;
See how each heart responds to Music's call,
Fire, sword, death, hell! it sternly braves them all.
A strange composure as of iron power,
Held Aubrey's face, at that dark battle hour;

Shall be a mimic hell in lurid glare,
Fill'd with a hundred dancing flames which surge,
And hiss, and crackle, an unearthly dirge;
Whereto, dim outlines, father'd by thy brain,
Resolved to Satan and his devils' train,
Shall add deriding dance and mocking song,
Caught up and echoed by a countless throng;
Whilst lightnings flash the sky from east to west,
And thunders help to break thy dying rest!"

O'er the hill's crest the smoke in sullen cloud
Hangs as a curtain, whilst discharges loud
Shake the firm earth, and wreaths of blood-red flame,
Harbinger murderous flights; these kill or maim
By scores and scores. Now, too, the English guns,
Trained by the willing hands of England's sons,
Bellow a loud response—with every breath
Strong men sink low, and Life gives way to Death!
And now with glories warlike scenes command,
Come the dense masses of the hostile band;
Through smoky clouds behold the valleys teem
With ranks of steel, which fling a quivering gleam
Like sunlight on the ripples, then are lost,
As the thick fog of war o'erwhelms the host!

Oh, splendid rank! too brave, methinks, too fair
For slaughter's work and hideous war to tear!
"Onward!" their cry, and still no wav'ring sign,
Though the hoarse cannon and small arms combine;
Treble and bass in this most bloody song,
And hurl destruction on the coming throng!

Fiercely the battle went, on every side
The conflict flowed or ebbed its gory tide.
The flames of war by frantic passion fann'd,
Raged terribly, nor spared the feeding hand!
The fearful clash, the shock, as rank met rank,
When the torn earth to bloody surfeit drank;
And shouts, shrieks, groans, revilings rent the air,
Or rose to heaven, commingl'd with a prayer.
Ah, yes, for on that field of demon's strife,
Where man defied his Maker's gift of Life,
In that black chaos, 'midst the deaf'ning roar,
Some rough hearts prayed, as they'd ne'er pray'd before,—
Cast off the shackles of their Hate and sigh'd
For God, Hope, Mercy, and—forgiven died!
Each foe met worthy foe upon that day,
Long hours of carnage, yet a balanced fray;

No flying host, no battle lost or won,
The sun went down, and yet the storm raged on;
Yet hurling, charging, clashing, and again
The blood-stain'd hoofs o'errode the heaps of slain.
Here, see the flutt'ring pennons to the van are borne
Their blazon'd signs all tatter'd, rent, and torn;
Here broken ranks for further effort burn'd,
Reformed their lines, and to the front returned;
Here, ghastly wounded, ere life's sands ran out,
Moved their gashed forms and tried to raise a shout;
Here, hosts repulsed, the rallying cry obey'd,
Closed up their ranks and fiercer onslaught made;
Or here, by one successful moment fired,
Press'd on, with thirst unslaked, and limbs untired!
When shall thy lust, oh man, for slaughter stay,
And fairer fields their victories display?
When shall the rage for warlike glories cease,
And equal laurels grace the brow of Peace?

Hark! to that wild huzza, the night wind brings,
Nearer and nearer its concordance rings;
Those English hearts who never beat a fear,
Throb with delight to find success so near—
The chosen band has stormed the hostile rear.

Just as the nice adjustment of a scale,
With smallest super-added weight must fail:
So may a battle's stubborn tide be turn'd,
And fear consume the hearts where courage burn'd.
A panic seiz'd the unexpectant host,
They wavered, broke,—they turned, the battle's lost!
No call now rallies—no: the spell is o'er,
And terrors double those which went before.

If battle's gage lets fiendish passions out
How shall be told the horrors of a rout?
When the defeated ranks return no blow,
But man lifts hand against a prostrate foe;
When the flushed columns Mercy's prayer refuse,
And crush the wretched victim as he sues.
When carnage outvies itself, and Vengeance sighs
That ere it wreaks its full the victim dies;
When manhood seems from its first nature wean'd,
And acts proclaim him less of man than fiend.
No valorous conflict now; no even fight,
But weakness overwhelm'd by ruthless might.
On! on! the victors sweep, a pitiless flood;
Deeply they drink, and still they thirst for blood.
On! on! till nature sinks, and will no more,

Or appetite grows satiate on gore!

The day was won! and o'er that battle plain
Its mounds of mangled and its heaps of slain
Night's curtain closed, alike on friends and foes,
And hid the witness of its bloody woes.
Thence came the carrion's cry, the raven's croak;
Across the wild expanse, the night wind broke,
These mingled with the dying groan, the prayer,
The neigh of steeds, and filled the reeking air.
Then came the pattering drops, the thunder peal'd,
The lightnings flash'd, and Nature's framework reel'd!
What sickening sights revealed that vivid glare,
Telling where Passion leads what man will dare;
How Glory calls, and man goes forth to die,
And unbid souls rush to eternity.
Yet in some quiet home the tale goes round
Of warlike deeds and corpse-encumber'd ground;
And hearts, which boast humanity will glow
And gloat o'er tidings dark to friend and foe.
Oh man! oh war! thy paths are not the same,
War's brightest glory is man's deepest shame.

The valiant band, whose prowess turn'd the day,

Broke the firm foe, and bore the palm away,
Paid for the laurels they had earn'd so well
The price of life, and where they conquer'd—fell.
Fast, fast, the torrent of their blood had flowed;
Fiercely and quickly had Death's sickle mow'd,
Yet none complained, or for existence sighed,
They did their duty, and contented—died!
Aubrey died too: to him death brought no pain,
Oft on that day he'd woo'd release in vain;
The foremost place was his, here fell the blow,
And Valour mourned when Aubrey was laid low.
And on that night, that time of death and storm,
There came a dim outline, a weeping form,
And lowly bending o'er the bleeding clay,
As if to scare the victor, Death, away,
Sobbed piteously, and to the heedless corse,
Poured forth a tale of agonized remorse.
Too late! too late! else why should that face bear,
Even in death, such utter, blank despair?
Oh, had this earthly grief scorned all control,
And for his love had Aubrey risk'd his soul!
Dread thought! when should that hapless moan be
hush'd,
As she had crush'd *his* heart so *she* was crush'd!

Bitterly she reaped as she'd been fain to sow,
And with the slain, lone witness of her woe,
Flung her false breast upon the gory dead,
And mingled her tears with his life drops red.

CANTO III.

Of all the foes whom Malice has combin'd
To wreak a vengeance on a weak mankind—
Of all the sins with which the world is curs'd,
Oh, Slander, surely thou must be the worst.
The form, who in man's borrowed image dressed,
Consents to hide thy presence in his breast;
In devil's learning is no untaught dunce,
But coward, traitor, liar, all at once!
And Mira, spotless Mira, must her dart
Be hurled to cleave thy unoffending heart?
Has Hate unleashed fierce Slander on thy track,
That ruthless hound, who knows not to turn back;
'Till in thy heart it hides its vengeful fangs,
And thy soul sinks a victim to its pangs?

Ah! hads't thou known the agony in store
Thou hadst not yearned to face the cold world more;
Contented to have slept an endless swoon,
Happy to die—nor dreamed the end too soon!

'Twas evening: and wandering once again
O'er the lone path they ever trod with pain;
Mira communed with Memory. Bereft
Of all but Solitude, what else was left?
The golden autumntide, now far advanced,
The varied beauties of the scene enhanced;
As chrysalis expands to butterfly,
And dons its tardy glories ere it die.
Each tree was decked in Nature's best array,
Ere wintry blast swept all its pride away.
Oh! when shall man say Nature's beauties wane?
Each season brings new glories in her train.
What flight of poesy aspires to sing,
The budding freshness of the infant spring?
When all responsive to her Maker's call,
She wakes from sleep, and lifts the wintry pall;
Who tell the joys of Summer?—when each hour,
Brings forth its myriads of varied flower,
When every breath drinks perfume, and the sun

Scarce knows a setting, ere rest's course has run;
When feather'd songster carols forth his lays,
And all Creation adds its hymn of praise.
And thou, oh winter! say what tongue shall shew,
Thy hoarfrost on the hedge, thy pathless snow;
Thy icy grasp, thy adamantine will
Which holds life bound, and yet forbears to kill?
Yet seasons four, if it were mine to say,
'Neath which fair sceptre I would pass my day;
Were I to choose, like Paris, which should bear
The palm of Beauty, when ye all are fair,
Methinks, oh autumn, it would be for thee
My heart would throb in hopeful ecstasy.
Who can describe what painters' hand pourtray,
The varied beauties of an autumn day?
Tell of Mosaic pattern, rich design,
Look on that group of lime, oak, beech, and pine;
Look on each branch and watch its charms unfold,
The summer green blended with tints of gold;
Rich amber, scarlet, or the purple hue,
And say if praise can give her more than due?

As Mira rambled o'er the leafy way,
She liv'd once more the dreadful parting day:

Its happy morn, its evening of grief,
The farewell hour, what hour ere seem'd so brief?
There seem'd a veil cast o'er that tearful eve,
A dim remembrance over which to grieve;
And wish it more distinct—sometimes 'twould lift,
And Mira mus'd upon some parting gift,
Which ere imperfect knowledge could conceal,
An anxious Mem'ry struggled to reveal;
Like mist, or fog, or half transparent screen,
Which dims, distorts, yet lets the form be seen.
Her mind was Chaos, and her whirling brain,
Tried to be calm and ruminate in vain;
No tidings reached her how the war fire sped;
He might be wounded; aye, he might be dead!
And she still there, far distant from the strife,
Alive—'twas true—yet oh, how tired of life;
She had forebodings; yes, most women have;
And all her visions ended with a grave.
Can we not each play sympathising part,
And plumb the sorrows of a loving heart;
Compelled to hear the stormy billows heave,
Yet cannot more than stay secure; and grieve
To hear the tempest's roar, and tremble lest
A loved one fall, yet can but hope the best,

To stay in safety with no power to share
The perils which his soul alone must dare;
To hear, of fire, sword, famine, wild wave's foam,
And feel the bonds which bind us slaves at home?

Night's pall was closing o'er the woody shade,
Yet still she wander'd on, or still she stay'd
In mood contemplative; and on the wings of thought
Distinct and firm, each loving word was brought.
'Twas here he told his love—on yonder knoll
He sat and spoke the yearnings of his soul;
'Twas there the first transporting kiss
Sealed vows they blindly hoped had brought them bliss.
Each stone seem'd with the happy past to teem,
Each leaf sang forth its tale of Life's young dream;
And when her reverie passed 'twas with dismay
She found her sorrows had outpaced the day.
The dusky night long silent strides had run,
And Luna had her circling course begun.
How many hearts with Valour's self imbued
Will shrink to meet a mystic solitude?
Will haste, unflinching, to the bloody fight,
Yet hesitate to face a lonesome night!

The moonbeams in their silvery hues arrayed
Cast shapes fantastic on the tangled glade,
Which leapt and gamboll'd as the autumn breeze
Cried shrilly through the proudly sombre trees;
And here and there came fluttering down a leaf
Which lived its time so changing, yet so brief;
Then by the ruthless wind was borne away,
To swell the heaps which germinate decay.

No lagging steps were Mira's on that night,
Those were the days when darkness brought forth fright;
When terror fell with eve's first drop of dew,
And spread a fear tradition only knew.
Through the lone brambled path she made her way,
Scaring the sleeping bird from rocking spray,
Crossing the wild cat in her nightly prowl,
And frighting terribly the screeching owl.
Was it a forest note, or Fancy's freak,
That call'd her by her name and bade her speak?
"Mira!" that shrill voice said, "I tell thee stay!"
But still she hurried on nor would obey;
Nearer and nearer, hastening on her track,
That voice approach'd, and still it call'd her back.

She heeded not: the fleet pursuer made
A spring, and then on Mira's arm was laid
A fever'd hand, the grasp so firm, so fast
'Twere useless to resist—escape had past!
How often Fear will danger's source outrun,
And think a terror, though there be not one;
How oft the soul reality outgrows,
And flies aghast, pursued by fancied foes,
But when the threatening enemy is faced,
His potence fathom'd, his intentions traced;
How oft o'er baseless fears with shame we've sigh'd,
And seen them self-inflicted, magnified,—
We'd fled the foe a brave heart had defied!

"Nay, maiden," cried the voice, "cease thy alarm,
Heaven knows this hand shall never do thee harm;
There's blood already there, of him who's slain,
Look on't, know'st thou how came this bloody stain?"
When Mira turn'd, she knew that flashing eye,
That face, that form, yet chang'd how terribly!
Was this the remnant of her, once so fair,
Was this the maid who used such charms to wear?
She would have griev'd—but why, oh why again
Did Cythrine moan those words "of him who's slain?"

A dread seized Mira's heart; she would have spurn'd
The form now suppliant, had less sorrow burn'd
In that fix'd glance, had pain shown less its force,
Or the soul hid its agony—Remorse!
O'er Mira's ashen face a cold sweat broke,
And with a heaving bosom thus she spoke:—
"Oh, wretched maid, explain this fearful scene,
Translate thy words and show me what they mean;
With the lone night, as witness of thy vows,
And heaven's host peeping through the lattic'd boughs;
By the remembrance of thy misplaced love,
And the great Deity Himself above,
By all the hopes which should thy soul imbue,
Of Life to come, speak on, and tell me true!"
"Oh mock me not! conjure me by the hell,
That pays the recompense I've earned so well;
Or by the imps that laugh in hideous glee
O'er a bound soul which strives not to be free.
But speak not thus; nay, let thy tongue be dumb,
And tell me not of Hope, of Life to come;
Else from this flesh where now it lies concealed,
My soul may spring and stand a fiend revealed!"
Yet start not so, unless my passion's fann'd

To fury, it lies calm; give me thy hand;
Heards't thou yon striking clock, it sounds the knell
Of all thy hopes. Listen whilst I can tell
The dreadful tale, nor shudder, 'tis in vain,
Soon my tongue stills, to never speak again!"
So on the luckless pair, the soft moon shone
Her beams, as their own faces, pale and wan;
The night wind rustled through the leafy veil,
While Cythrine told and Mira heard the tale;
Which brought a depth of woe nought else could reach,
Remorse to one and agony to each!

Cythrine spoke fully, how her hopes were built
On bases laid and structures rear'd in guilt;
How in her breast, omnipotent had burn'd,
The love she fondled, when she should have spurn'd.
How it outgrew itself, became insate,
Then jealous, hopeless, then resolv'd to hate!
How Passion raged, and dark desires saw dawn,
How Hate conceived and how Revenge was born;
How 'neath his reign, the woman lost control,
And ruthless Vengeance ruled a reckless Soul!
"Oh, Cythrine!" Mira cried, "can sin defame

God's fairest work, with—oh! so foul a shame?
Thou could'st not love, 'twas but a hateful thought,
Passion instill'd, and Jealousy had taught."
"Nay, rouse me not," shriek'd Cythrine, "I would not
Add to this tarnish'd heart a blacker spot.
Not love thee, Aubrey! this poor heart can tell,
How well I've loved; alas! 'tis true; too well!
Each breath I'd drill'd to sound thy name, and taught
My soul to fashion thee in ev'ry thought!
'Tis but one step from Love to Hate—one bound;
The heart that's lov'd can know no neutral ground;
But when the triumph's full, revenge is o'er,
And Love returns more potent than before;
Whilst in its train, Remorse unsparing wings
The sharpest pang stern Retribution brings!
But to my tale——"
"No more," cried Mira, "no:
I know all now. Loose me and let me go.
Leave the wreck'd heart to silence and its woe!"
"But thou *shalt* hear, quick ere my strength shall fail,
'Tis Pennance cries, that I should tell this tale.

Shall I seek mercy, or her office claim?
I tell thee no, I'll drink my full of shame.
I tracked him to the camp and day by day
I watched, and hoped to see his love decay;
Through the still lines at night I stealthy crept,
And gazed upon him while he calmly slept.
He dreaming muttered and I lean'd and heard
Thy name upon his lips, or love's fond word;
He dreamed of glory, and the laurels bore,
'Mira' engraved on every leaf he wore.
With every thought I read thy love was lin'd,
And with each spray thy imag'ry entwin'd!
Then his mood changed, the warry scene had flown,
And his soul revell'd in her love alone;
Yielded her strivings to its gentler reign,
Or woke, to lay him down and dream again.
And when he proudly march'd to join the fray,
I watched and prayed the dream had passed away;
But in the flush upon his ardent cheek
I read the love no tongue could better speak.
'Twas then I fathomed his affection's power,
And saw it fixed, nor changing with the hour;
Nor distance hiding, absence dimming, but Life's
whole

Bright in the hopes, he treasured in his soul."
"Oh! 'tis enough," cried Mira, "I beseech, implore,
Leave me to solitude, nor tell me more.
Can Pity's voice be so completely hush'd,
It will not plead—to hear a heart so crush'd?"
"Mira, what is thy grief to mine, thy moan
Is bred of sorrow's self, unstain'd, alone.
Had dire Remorse his deadly lesson taught,
Thoud'st learn'd that grief without his sting is nought.
Thereto I'd lov'd unchang'd; true, Shame was dead;
And Jealousy had rear'd her cruel head;
Yet 'gainst conviction I had hoped and fought,
But now the fury of despair's onslaught
Made my love waver to its deepest core,
And ere I understood, I lov'd no more!
Satan was ready, and with sin beguil'd,
For the first time for long, long days I smiled—
A bitter smile, to which no joy gave birth,
A fraud on smiles, so destitute of mirth!
And yet I falter'd not, but persevered,
Nursing the thoughts my better nature feared.
Oh, 'twas a joyless joy, so full of pain,
To let hate wreck the heart love could not gain!

Mira, there are some times when Nature's might
Sinks into weakness and forbears to fight;
When the soul shuns the foe, and conscience cowers
Before the deadly missiles Satan showers.
And there are others, when a poor mankind
Bravely defies the host of hell combin'd,
Strikes to the last, nor knows what 'tis to fly,
And in the darkest hour plucks victory.
Then 'tis that Satan, baffled in the field,
Seeks out an ambush, and there lies conceal'd,
Lurks in a seeming virtue, and decoys
The victor soul with a temptation's toys;
Cloaks in the fairest hues a deepest vice,
And wakes a craving nothing satisfies;
Panders to every weakness, wish, and lust,
Whispers of malice, and displays it just;
And he who firm a battle's shock withstood,
Is lured to evil, and believes it good.
And so it was, I sought to find excuse
When my revenge from all its bonds broke loose,
And as I laid and perfected my plan,
Fast as desire, my exculpation ran."

"Hidden beneath a veil of thick disguise

I deemed impenetrable to his eyes,
I sought his tent. 'Twas in the early dawn,
With night at even variance with morn,
And with the license an assumed age lent
O'er his recumbent form—I silent bent."
"False soul!" cried Mira, "when thou saw'st him there,
Couldst thou find heart to mar a form so fair;
To look, and yet not stem Revenge's flood,
To see, nor waver in thy deed of blood?"
Oh! had I weaken'd in my act of wrong,
That token on his breast had made me strong;
Yet it was not this little trembling hand
Which did the deed that had a man unmann'd.
No, 'twas this tongue which wafted Slander's breath,
Broke the firm heart, and drove him to his death!
I told him thou was't false!"
"Oh perjured maid
Had'st thou but left that cruel wrong unsaid,
Thou had'st deserv'd a less of hellish wage,
Nor poison'd woe, no power could e'er assuage!
Oh! Aubrey, Aubrey, that thou thus should'st die,
Upbraiding me for an inconstancy!
Yet wanted he no proof—was he content

To take as true what Malice might invent?"
"Mira, 'tis said revenge is always blind,
A passive agent to a reckless mind;
Yet it is ofttime sure, and will display
No faltering footstep on its hasty way!
I was prepared: I spoke about the ring;
He took the bait, and asked that proof to bring
Ha! to my hate it was a morsel sweet,
To fling the damning token at his feet!
To see the strong man tremble like a leaf,
And sink o'erwhelmed beneath his weight of grief!"
"Oh, what a devil's plan," sobbed Mira; "well
Might it have seen maturity in hell.
Yes, 'tis for human heart too foul a plot,
Fostered by fiends, by Satan's self begot!"
"Upbraid me not," cried Cythrine, "say no more,
All thou canst say, has Conscience said before;
I know it all; ah, yes! my soul has made
A surfeit of her sorrow, and so stayed
Woe's appetite. I care not, come what will,
I cannot more, my soul has drunk her fill.
I want not earthly bliss however fair,
Nor Heaven's abode, if Aubrey be not there;
Quick, on the never lagging wings of Time,

Comes justice' hour to expiate my crime."

" Mira, pride is Man's universal creed ;
Who will not follow where his dictates lead ?
It was the battle morn : I chose that day,
That pride might counsel to throw life away—
That it might whisper in the coming strife
To end at once his grief, his shame, his life.
That he might bless the hand which laid him low,
And hide with Life, the secret of his woe.
Upon an overhanging rock I stood,
And watched him meet the death his pride had woo'd.
I could not see him die. The battle's pall
Hung o'er the scene, and hid its sick'ning all;
The roar, the shouts, the clash, the battle tone
Unceasing rang, and drown'd his dying groan;
And yet I pictured all and madly laughed
Over the full measure of Revenge I quaff'd.

Thus the day wore, the foe's proud ranks were crushed,
And the harsh din of battle's gage was hushed;
Then a dread silence hover'd o'er the plain,

And Night began impenetrable reign.
Ha! with the day, my joy's revengeful wan'd,
My Hate took wing; alas! its deeds remain'd.
The sweets of Vengeance faded from my mind,
But left their more than bitterness behind.
And ere the lights last lingering gleam had flown,
I and my agony were left alone!"
"Oh Love!" cried Mira, "thou deceiving dream,
Lavish of promise, tardy to redeem.
Fruitful of hope, but destined to be foil'd,
A harvest ripening, but to be despoil'd!
Are these beauties, these the pleasures fair,
Which my fond hopes had pictur'd Love to wear?
Alas! that yearnings which began in bliss,
Should find their ending in such grief as this!
So earthly joys and passions go their way,
And fairest flowers speed soonest to decay."

"My hour," said Cythrine, "to its close has run,
Would that its evils, as its course, were done;
Would the last flutter of my failing breath,
Dispersed thy woes, and called him back from Death.
On that lone field where man's fierce rage had spent,
But to give place to warring element.

Amidst the thunder and the beating rain,
I sought his corse—alas! nor searched in vain;
Too truly there, he ranked among the slain.
Mira! in that consummate moment brief
Was press'd the essence of a life-long grief,
And yet how poor a word to tell the force,
The poison'd agony we call—Remorse!
Nay, though the soul should a description deign,
She finds no language to denote her pain!
Then 'twas I understood for the first time
The depth immeasurable of my crime;
No ray of hope, no mercy's glimmering spark,
I reel'd beneath the blow, my brain grew dark,
I threw myself upon his form and swore
Till retribution came—I'd sleep no more;
I looked, and lo, my hands were steeped in gore;
'Twas his life's stream which flowed its crimson flood,
And cried that nought could cleanse the stain but blood.
Yet ere I died, the resolution came
To drain the cup of my too bitter shame;
I vowed I'd tell my tale to thee, and tear
The covering from my soul and lay it bare,
And as I stood on Retribution's brink,

Show the black depth to which a soul may sink.
'Tis done—yes, Mira, done—look on it well,
And see on earth a dim foretaste of hell;
And whilst it leaves this too pure flesh to hide
Where Satan's ranks in expectation bide,
Let malediction from thy pale lips burst,
Bid the infernal host to wreak their worst,
And cry no mercy on the doubly cursed."
Whilst she yet spoke, a momentary gleam,
Quivering, reflected back the pale moonbeam;
And before Mira her intentions guessed,
The deadly blade was hid in Cythrine's breast;
She sank without a sigh to break the night,
Her soul ne'er murmured as it took its flight,
Once more had Passion all control outvied,
A slave to impulse living—so she died!

Strong is the human soul. What weight of grief
It bears before it stoops to claim relief,
Nor spurns its earthly home; but still will dare,
If Reason's left, and Hope still smoulders there.
Yet there are times when sorrow's stream runs strong,
A raging current bearing all along,
When a dark, frantic rage o'erflows the soul

The mind rebels and Passion scorns control.
When Thought's effaced Hope dies and Reason shakes,
And the tir'd heart gives up the fight and breaks!
Then Man's poor nature fails, and every breath
Becomes a sigh, and every sigh breathes death.

From that eventful eve, now long grown old,
When Mira drank the tale the guilty told,
The maiden vanished; though the country round
Was searched, 'twas vain! She never more was found!
Whether she solv'd the problem, often tried,
And sought in death a peace which life denied;
Or almost sadder—lived a blasted time,
And paid with reason for another's crime;
Or braved the seasons of a changing year,
Careless of want and destitute of fear;
Hov'ring those agonizing precincts nigh,
'Till sinking Nature made her pause—to die!
I know not. Yet still the good folks say,
When the black night has chased the light away,
Sounds of her grief upon the ear will grate,
And lamentations yet reverberate!

Alone in the World.

Down among the sunny valleys,
Whence the flock of lambkins sallys,
Where the little river flows,
Where the herd of cattle lows,
Where is spread the meadow's green,
Where the little wood is seen,
Where the yellow cornfields wave,
Where the rooks meet in conclave;
Whence the mountain rears his head,
Where the bluebell makes her bed;
Where the mossy fountain hides,
Where the fleecy thistle-down rides;
Where yon nestling stony tower,
Chiming forth the passing hour,
Like a speck of glist'ning foam
On the green wave stood our Home!

Ha! ye dales; ye verdant Hills,
And ye babbling, sparkling rills;
Ah ye wood-be-brambled nooks,
Ye lowing herds, ye cawing rooks,
Eloquent your voices cry,
Happy times! gone bye, gone bye!
Tell me if it be a crime
To sigh for a departed time!
Oh, Contentment! tell me, tell,
May I on my childhood dwell?
Is it wrong to waft a sigh,
To the dear old times gone by?
Is it wrong to drop a tear,
And wish days buried long were here?
Tell me, tell me, may I roam,
Back again to yonder home?

Here within this flow'ry dell,
Childhood knew and loved so well,
Let me lie me down to dream,
Let the past the present seem.
Let the days entomb'd, be brought,
Swiftly on the wings of thought;
Let my keen remembrance trace,

Ev'ry well belov'd face.
Oh, recall from Time's lost doom,
That dear, old, familiar room;
Father near the chimney wide,
Mother sitting at his side,
Brothers, sisters, a dear host,
Overwhelm'd by Time, and lost;
Oh kind rev'rie take me back,
Once again, that beaten track.

Where is now my father gone,
Where my mother, where each one?
Ask the tomb beneath the tree,
Ask the battle and the sea,
Ask the distant hemisphere,
Ask this weary spirit here;
All were scatter'd, all are dead,
Sod or wave hides every head;
Sorrows' harvest has been sown,
I am reaper, I'm alone!

Those, whose ev'ry bitter hour,
Is sweeten'd by affection's power;
Who know not what it is to live
Without the pleasures love bonds give.

Who know not what it is to roam,
The whole world through, nor find a home;
Whose every day sees Love renew'd,
Ye know not what is Solitude!

Ha! kind dream, 'twas not in vain,
I ask'd,—I see them all again;
Yet stay—it fades, it dims, it flies!
The vision goes, its outline dies!
There's nothing left me now to see,
But dreary, dreary, vacancy!
Nay, vanish not, sweet thought so soon,
Scarce given, ere withdrawn, the boon;
Let me feast my eyes once more,
E'er the transient dream is o'er.
Once again those outlines send,
Let me see how looks a friend;
Let me see a sister, brother,
Let me trace a father, mother—
One more glance, kind vision, then
Would, oh would they were forgotten;
Vain hope! the imag'ry has gone,
And I am left once more alone.

Oh all this fearful torture—wrack,
Could I but turn Life's current back;
Sail from the present scene to cast
An anchor in the happy past.
By experience well taught,
Value well the placid port;
Could I live life o'er again,
Then I had not liv'd in vain.

Oh, 'tis weary life to lead,
Like some rank, intrusive weed;
In a world where all are flowers,
Blooming in the sunny hours.
Like a cloud that hovers nigh,
An unsullied azure sky;
Like a sharp, discordant note,
Coming from a songster's throat.
Like some bitter-water'd well,
Springing in a verdant dell;
Like some shadow on the sun;
Dimming ere his course is run,
Like obnoxious insects crawl,
Producing none, destroying all;
So the friendless casts a shade,
Where his habitation's made;

When shall that sweet future come,
Bringing me a friend—a home!

Ah! Ambition's fire will die,
Smiles will wither to a sigh;
Hope will change to blank despair,
Happiness to weary care;
Shadows flit o'er sunny ray,
Night usurp the place of day;
Valiant thoughts the soul forsake,
And the firmest spirit break;
Goods' self become but evil,
Man himself bc changed to devil,
And as angels tongues would tell,
Heav'n's blest precincts be a hell;
Were aught else proclaim'd above,
But an atmosphere of Love.

Oh! I want a heart to beat,
Sympathetically sweet;
Oh! I want some loving breast,
Where my sorrows may find rest.
What without is fame or money?
'Tis the wax without the honey!

'Tis the rose without its scent!
'Tis an archer's bow unbent!
'Tis a statue cold and dead!
'Tis a weary, sleepless bed!
'Tis a steed without control!
'Tis a man without a soul!
'Tis the sun without his beam!
'Tis a sleep and no sweet dream!
Oh, 'tis like a leafless tree,
At best, but naked majesty.

Where, oh! tell me, shall I find,
Soothing balm for aching mind?
Take me to the fountain where
Waters flow, which make life fair;
Nobler thoughts my bosom claim,
Than the empty fire of Fame.
There is a void nought else can fill,
A tumult which will not be still;
A yearning which will not be stay'd,
A call which says 'twill be obey'd;
Ah yes! the brightest hopes above,
Man demands a heart to love.

A Good Fairy.

Far from the world and all its weary strife,
In the calm quietude of village life
One chanc'd to dwell.
In pensive solitude his days seem'd spent,
No friendly circlet happy converse lent,
On what concerns his energies were bent,
No one could tell.

At early morn the villagers had seen,
His presence walking on the village green,
Or pass'd him by;
And little rosy children lov'd to tell
Of days, which they, young scamps, remember'd well;
When coin, real and sterling, by them fell,
As they did curtsey.

Gossip, of course, a ready subject found,
And many a tale concerning him went round,
Some good, some bad;
By times he was a Cynic, word and deed,
Now gen'rous and kind, now rich, and now in need;
But on one point the villagers agreed,
That he was mad.

His house stood hid, all desolate and alone,
With nought to cheer him, but the night bird's moan
Among the trees;
Doubtless he was some acrid misanthrope,
Who feasted on Despair, and strangled Hope;
There let him be, and quickly might he grope
His way to Hades.

In that same village, so the legends say,
A Fairy also dwelt, who charm'd away
The poor man's care;
Was some hardworking peasant wont to till,
With family dependent, laid up ill;
Somehow the scanty larder seem'd to fill
With needed fare.

And many a poor old dame, old age's slave,
Or gaffer tottering to a ready grave,
Could tell with glee,
Of knocks mysterious at cottage door,
And little packets from the grocer's store,
Which hands thrust in, and vanish'd, long before
Their eyes could see.

'Twas very strange—they scarcely understood,
How human character could be so good,
And all the best.
The tea perfection, conscience them defend;
Sugar matchless, the cheese! but who could send?
So poor as they,—they hadn't got a friend.
They drank and guessed.

A neighbour call'd; a man morose, might be
Who look'd on all things with suspicions 'ee,
They'd best be chary;
No man so gen'rous could on earth be found,
Search the whole world, the parish, round and round;
Some trick of ready Satan's, he'd be bound
To trap the unwary.

This stagger'd many a too nervous dame,
But still the knocks, and still the packets came,
To their alarm!
The most courageous soon from doubt got free,
They ate the bread and meat, and drank the tea,
Or whatsoever else the mystic gift might be,
Nor felt they harm.

'Twas stuff and nonsense, that they all agreed,
To think 'twas in the human race's breed
To give unknown;
'Taint likely, said the ancient village wise,
They couldn't give, without they advertise;
The print ye see's, where givings' pleasure lies,
Where Fame is sown.

When such a man as neighbour A. opin'd,
He must be foolish, mad, opaque and blind
Not to agree;
Argue with him, so vers'd in learnèd lore,
He said, enough! what bumpkin wanted more;
Of course! why hadn't they thought of that before—
It *was* a fairy.

That eas'd their minds, yet still some laid in wait,
'Neath cottage porch, or hid behind the gate,
In hopes to spy;
But it so happen'd on such occasions,
Despite commendable amount of patience,
Neither the good fairy nor their rations
Pass'd ever by.

Well, winter came, and eastern winds and snow,
And frost and hunger, Poverty's chief woe,
And things look'd bad.
Down many a father's face the tear-drops roll'd,
As he look'd on a little shiv'ring fold,
Whose hearts and bodies, both, were starv'd and cold;
Both thinly clad.

Yes, yes: the little heart to turn out good,
Must have its merry warmth, its sunny food
To cheer the way;
Else, like the tiny worms, our garden foes,
Born in the bud, will live to spoil the rose;
So the man's heart may sour with childhood's woes,
And see decay.

The ground grew hard, and work began to fail,
Prospects look'd black as clouds, and faces pale
As snowy flake;
Ah! as many a former frost had taught,
'Twas a hard, hard fight, which winter brought—
A weary battle to be bravely fought,
Ere spring should break.

Then Christmas near'd, to many a cot it came
A dreary time—a Christmas but in name,
As they well found;
Here little hearts, already old in woe,
Tried to look glad, as if they didn't know,
That night had seen the last dry morsel go
Its scanty round.

Some few there were complain'd, and with excuse,
Poor hungry souls! but then, where was the use
It nothing brought;
And some there were, went gath'ring holly spray,
For fear the morrow might career away;
Nor they remember it was Christmas day,
As good folks ought.

Well, the day went, as other days will go,
And still the frost was there, and still the snow
Lay on the ground;
But just about the witching Fairy time,
To disbelive the Fairy was a crime,
A knock, a pudding, and some roast beef prime,
Came at a bound.

And here and there, some flannel fit for gowns,
A coat, or neatly wrapp'd in paper, two half-crowns,
All new and bright.
Oh! wasn't there all about a gay uproar!
Didn't the youngsters hurry to the door;
But lo! the fairy vanish'd as before,
Resolv'd to night.

Oh! could the Fairy only just have seen
The happy souls, she'd been repaid I ween,
Nor deem'd aught lost.
Ah! ye who but for selfish pleasures live,
Where hearts know not how to beat responsive,
Ye cannot tell the joy it is to give,
At little cost.

* * * *

The old house hid behind the sombre trees,
With branches rocking in the wintry breeze
Look'd lonely—sad;
There was no sound within, the blinds were drawn,
No more the friendless stranger walk'd at morn,
And to the village were the tidings borne,
That he was dead.

Yes, there he lay within a little room,
With scarce more comforts than the gaping tomb,
So dreary—bare.
The limbs once active stiffened, cold, and numb,
The eyes were sightless and the tongue was dumb;
Yes, yes, 'twas Death's black, ruthless hand had come
And grasp'd him there!

Then came the funeral, ah! so poorly mean,
Death brought no more of pomp than life had seen
To deck his pall;
One dingy mourner, by the coach came down,
An outside traveller from a distant town,
Who's suit of black showed age's tints of brown,
And he was all.

And so they bore him to his narrow home,
A little mound was all that mark'd his tomb,
No more was there;
The lounging groups who saw the death rank go,
And scorn'd to swell the little meagre show,
Scarce dream'd it was the fairy they laid low,
With his grey hair!

The waving grass which flourished on his grave,
Felt not the nourishment a love tear gave,
Or pity toss'd;
Only the night bird o'er his burial cried;
Nought but the wind its melancholy sighed,
For with his life his life's remembrance died,
Forgotten, lost!

So many a man of unpretending part,
Content to hide his virtues in his heart;
Meeting no soul who's kindred to his own,
Oft lives unnoticed, and then dies unknown.

Not Yet.

I ASK'D a little babbling child
If it were time to die;
His breath grew quick, his heart beat wild
And tears stood in his eye.

"Not yet," he answered, "I'm afraid;
I've often been to see
The coffins in the dark ground laid,
Beneath the willow tree.

And I have shuddered to behold,
Then dreamed of them at night;
Those clods of earth, so black and cold,
That hid them from my sight."

"And little tombs there are," I said,
"Of children such as you;
Then why should you be so afraid,
To be there buried too?

You do not think it time to die,
While young and innocent?"
"Oh no, not yet!" he pass'd me by,
Thus saying as he went.

I met a young man, as I walked,
His form erect and strong;
Of love and youthful hopes he talked,
As he careered along.

I followed, and I bid him say
Was he prepared to die?
"Not yet," he said, and went his way,
Scarce deigning to reply.

"Vain youth," I cried, "what is thy might,
Opposed to Death's grim power;
Were he to summon thee to-night
Could'st thou resist an hour?"

I next turned to a centre page,
In Life's much chequer'd book;
I saw the man of middle age,
With restless, careworn look.

Though his young hopes had shattered lain,
Long killed by Time's rough blast;
Less pure desires for gold and gain,
Were bearing fruit at last.

I asked him if from earthly soil
He were prepared to soar;
To bid adieu to its harsh toil,
And weary him no more.

"Not yet," he answered me; "oh no!"
And with a mocking sigh,
"I have too much to do below,
I haven't time to die!"

I shuddered at the smile which played
Upon his thin pale face;
Methought the joke, the man essayed
Bore Atheism's trace.

Oh! let your thoughts, such men be turn'd,
To those beneath the sod;
There learn the lesson they have learned,
Who made their gold their god.

I saw the old, the feeble man,
The man with snowy hair,
Whose friends, in life's great race outran,
And left him only there.

A long, long way, he could look back,
On Time's rough stormy sea;
And now he stood in life's wide track,
Alone, unfettered, free.

He'd nothing left on earth to love,
No friend to wish "good bye,"
Would he not like to rise above,
And meet them in the sky?

"No, not yet," was the old man's cry,
"A little time I crave,
See, I am strong, too strong to die
And crumble in the grave!"

Old age! make ready for Death's call,
And thou shalt live again;
But better ne'er have lived at all,
Than lived so long in vain.

Ye young! no faith to strong limbs give,
Nor on your youth rely;
If ye are old enough to live,
Ye're old enough to die.

The Angler.

By the stately river wide,
Or by the little rippling brook,
Give me but a line and hook
What care I for the world beside?

All its fancied pleasures dream,
All its noisy scenes of riot,
Give me but the still, soft quiet,
And the music of the stream!

Let me on the soft bank stand
Throwing artfully my fly,
Or find a shady nook and lie
Rod at side and book in hand.

Oh, the pleasures of the line!
Pure, without a base alloy,
And the veriest earthly joy,
If fish bite and weather's fine!

A True Heart.

Oh! bid me not to love again,
You know not what you say,
As well tell cloudless sky to rain
Or night to turn to day.
A true heart never loves but one,
And should Fate prove unkind
Love dies uprooted and undone,
Nor leaves a germ behind!

The Cottager's Toast.

Fiercely blows the wintry gale
O'er the landscape, snowy pale,
Shut fast the door,
And let it roar,
For ourselves, we'll stir no more!

Bring the tankard of home brew,
Nor any man a better drew,
So here's to thee,
And here's to me,
And here's to friend and enemy!

The Old Man's Smile.

I once did know an old man
With thin white locks of hair,
And furrow'd cheeks, and tott'ring step,
But a smile was always there;
It play'd upon his quiv'ring lip,
It fired his aged eye,
It outshone ev'ry cloudy thought
And sweeten'd every sigh,
And when the old man slumber'd
I crept up to his chair,
And looked upon his dear old face,
And the smile, it still shone there.
I stay'd and when he waken'd,
With the freedom of a child,
I clamber'd up upon his knee
And ask'd him why he smil'd.

"My boy," he answer'd lovingly,
"A smile, methinks, like heaven,
To lighten our hard earthly bread
And make it taste of heaven!"

* * * *

One day his chair was vacant
Close by the chimney wide,
I crept me up the staircase
And bent at his bedside;
His furrow'd cheeks were whiter,
As snowy as his hair,
His hands were clasp'd upon his breast
As if he were in prayer.
I gazed upon his features
And listen'd for his breath,
But the silence was unbroken
And I knew I look'd on Death!
The grave had lost its terrors
And Death itself look'd fair,
For though the soul had vanish'd
The smile still flicker'd there.
And often in the night-time
My sleeping thoughts will roam,
And I think I see the old man

Up in his starry home.
He's in among the angels,
Oh! such a glorious band,
A host of costly jewels they,
And countless as the sand.
And I hear the old man singing
Amidst the heavenly throng,
Such bright and happy melody,
A smile rings through the song!

Remorse.

Say! what is this which racks my brain by night;
Refusing me a moment's rest of thought;
Which still clings to me as the morning breaks,
And stays till evening vespers come again?
What is it manufactures out of air
Those figures and those forms; those well known
sights
Which I have look'd upon in years gone by?
Say! has the earth commenced to retrogade,
And is each long past scene again to be?
Or have I only dreamt that time has flown,
And now awake to find reality?
It cannot be. It were impossible
For a dream's pain to be so natural!
The throbbing head, the ever tossing frame,
The counting of the chimes that tell the hours—
Impatient at the tardiness of Time—

Were far too plain to be a sleeping thought.
Each step I've taken since a little child,
Each path I've travers'd since in mind I walk'd,
The screen of intervening space withdrawn
I see as plainly as I ever did!
And this it is which fans the ruthless fire,
Which withers, yet will not consume my soul,
Those roads which lead to sin and sin's reproach
I see myself traversing without fear,
Unconsciously falling in the snare.
If I'd but known! but now the hour is gone,
And Mem'ry's all that's left of what has been;
'Tis Mem'ry that strikes me to the heart,
Whilst Conscience adds the poison to the wound;
And these two, rankling in my pain-torn breast,
Like the tipp'd arrow hist'ry tells us of,
Whose wound defied the art of medicine,
Make me the victim of endless remorse!
Oh! scoffing fiend, why show me all this now—
Why point thy scornful hand at what I am,
And bid me look at what I might have been?
Why laugh at Penitence and cry "Too late!"
Oh, 'tis a coward strikes a fallen man!
Could'st thou but bring me death, I'd bless,

Extol, and deem thee best, yea, best of friends!
Yet, 'tis in vain I taunt, in vain implore,
Would that Death's self would see my suff'rings o'er;
But ah! dread thought! Eternity's in store.

A Farewell.

The sun is sinking, darling,
Before he rises more
The proud barque will be sailing
Far, far from England's shore.

Then let me once more tell thee
The love so oft confess'd,
And feel thy fond heart flutter
Its answer on my breast.

Oh! Love, thou wondrous wizard,
Thine is a magic power
To shed a beam of Heav'nly light
On ev'ry earthly hour.

The parting may be painful,
Our drooping souls be sad,
Love whispers words of bliss to come
And Sorrow's self grows glad.

Ingratitude.

THERE is a sin from which I shrink
As from some abyss' giddy brink,
And dread to fall.
Ingratitude! oh, get thee hence,
Uncancell'd scarce by Penitence,
Where is thy compeer, base offence!
Worse than they all

The darkest sins man's mind can form,
Enmity's most unbridled storm
In stead, give me.
'Tis the true heart thou turns't to rend,
The man who's been thy faithful friend,
The hand e'er ready to defend
And bleed for thee!

That soul to such temptation lean'd
And harbour'd such a deadly fiend,
Defies belief.

To turn and sting the kindly breast
Where thy sad head has oft found rest,
Maybe to break the heart that blest,
And sooth'd each grief!

There is a Heav'n, there is a hell!
Nor needs it prophet to foretell
Which thine shall be.
Justice forbids thee Canaan's land,
Devils cry "Welcome" to their band,
Nor Mercy's self shall change demand,
Or lisp a plea!

Honour to Old Age.

Let's honour old age; may its claims ne'er be lost,
For its glories are purchased at terrible cost,
Of pains of the body, and of aches of the mind,
Sprung from sickness attendant, or sins left behind;
For the best man amongst us, whate'er be his caste,
Feels naught but regret at the life he has pass'd;
With but trouble and care, his decadence is rife,
He has all of the woes and no pleasures of life.
He dismisses the past, and refuses to cope
With the too cruel present, and places his hope
In the bright golden future, when port shall be gain'd,
His journey be finished, and his haven attain'd.
Then let's honour the aged, the man of grey hairs,
'Tis the world that has plagued him with troubles and cares;
So let the world soften ere the old man depart,
Own it has used him badly, and gladden his heart;
Be no happiness his who an injury dares,
And no fortune to him who would scowl on grey hairs.

The Dead Child.

Hush! 'twas the rain drops falling,
No, no! *he* can't be calling;
'Twas the rain, the rain
On the window pane,
He will never call again.

Hark! was't those pattering feet,
Sounded such harmony sweet?
But the night's winds roar,
Comes shaking the door;
His feet will patter no more.

Hush! he's awake in his bed,
No, no! for they say he is dead;
'Tis the wild bird's moan,
For his life has flown,
And I—oh, I am alone.

Hark! 'twas his voice in that song,
No, no! I cannot be wrong;
A hymn from on high,
His home in the sky;
Mother! you'll come by and bye.

Never Despair.

When the sky seems bright and clear,
When no cloud is hovering near,
And Ease whispers, "Nothing fear,"
He who's wise will build the less
On earth's joy and happiness!

As the pinnacle is gain'd,
As the highest walk's attain'd,
See, the golden scene has wan'd;
Highest fame, and top of all,
Cannot rise, but maybe—fall!

But when clouds are thick and black,
All dark on the troublous track,
Onward, onward, ne'er turn back;
Then fresh heart and courage take
For the stormy scroll must break.

At the bottom of the hill,
Cannot fall, but may rise still,
Forward now with heart and will;
With new effort breast the mound,
Higher—higher from the ground!

Oh! Never Ask me to Be Thine.

Oh! never ask me to be thine,
It cannot, cannot be;
The heart you crave, to give's not mine,
'Tis his, beyond the sea.

'Twas when youth budded fresh and green,
We first affection knew;
Since then his every hope I've been,
He lives but while I'm true.

And shall I crush the noble heart,
That trusts me with its life,
Its dreams and their fulfilment part,
And be another's wife?

May heaven this faithless soul forsake,
If I such wrong shall do;
The heart may wither, burst, or break,
I still will keep it true.

The Tolling Bell.

Oh! 'tis the sad bell tolling,
Down cheeks hot tears are rolling,
For man is Death's slave,
The fair and the brave
Are but food for the greedy grave!

Ah yes! if that jarring bell
Could but its own moral tell,
Of the young and old,
The weak and the bold,
That the long lines of green graves hold!

Who lifteth in pride his head,
Say—what is Man when he's dead;
Ask the cold grave deep,
And the worms which creep
O'er the cor'se in its deathly sleep!

Despair.

Who talks of Hope? 'Tis sacrilege to touch
On that fair name within this dark abode.
I have no hope! 'tis Trouble's iron hand
Has proved Hope's murderer.
But come, sit down, I'll tell my tale of woe,
And you shall judge of its intensity.
I once was young, don't start, I am not old;
But trouble feeds on the body as the mind,
And brings to both decay. These whiten'd locks,
Blanch'd as they are, are but the outward signs
Of that consuming bitterness within,
Which taints my aspirations ere they're formed,
And breaks them ere they gain an utterance.
'Twas not so always. In my early youth
A cloud was ne'er so thick, but that some gleam
Could pierce it, and oft has a trouble been
But the precursor of a blessing. All is chang'd,

The sun has set, and in the place of day
Night's canopy is drawn, too thick and black
Even to admit the mock'ry of a star!
But whence this change? aye, ask that question now,
And let me tell you where the answer is;
Point to a word, and bid you read in that
How a whole life is blasted, seared, and crushed;
How the bright bloom of youth was on this cheek,
Now wan and pale with never-ceasing care;
And healthy, sparkling light shone in these eyes
Sunken and burning with unnatural fire!
Oh, happy childhood; innocent, serene,
Untouched, untainted by the outer world,
Whose only thoughts of earth are thoughts of home,
And only aspirations—hopes of heaven!
When the young, tender mind is taught and trained
With the solicitude of a parent's heart,
And learns to look upon mankind as good,
Nor forms a doubt that ev'ry soul is sav'd.
Oh, fleeting childhood! Scarcely child ere man,
Scarce innocent, ere guilty as the rest,
How hard to change thy glowing sun to clouds
And thy tranquility to murd'rous fight,
How hard to tear the veil from trusting eyes

And shew the world to be but what it is—
To teach confiding nature not to love,
But to mistrust and hate his brother man!
Yet so it is. I, too, recall the day;
Far, far, it seems; yet I remember well
When the soft bonds of home I flung away,
And proudly felt myself to be a man!
A man! proud title this, from distance view'd
The highest pinnacle of youthful wish,
And deeds are plann'd and resolutions made
As childish lips lisp forth, "When I'm a man!"
So manhood came, and as the treach'rous sea
Which looks so placid from a distant height,
Mayhaps is tossing in tempestuous wave
And threatening to engulph the trusting barque,
I found the world all malice—envious,
Injustice ruling it—no matter how
All men must thrive, and avarice taught
How weak men may be made the prey of strong.
What matter'd if lives were marr'd and crush'd,
And homes and hearts were broken and brought low
What matter'd it, if death were woo'd and won,
And uncalled souls rush'd to their last account
Heedless of judgment, and the great Hereafter?

There were long years when my young hopeful blood
Coursed through their veins, and bid me persevere;
When I had aspirations to excel,
And trusted to the future to repay
The anguish, and the buffetings I bore!
How has that future come? Look on these lines
Which more of sorrow, than of age has trac'd,
Feel this poor pulse—count its unequal throb
And note my tott'ring step and feeble frame;
Yet your mind reads not all the wreck I am,
Nor compasses the havoc of Despair!
'Tis not in human eye to search the heart
Or penetrate the ruin of a soul!
To see that nothingness, that void within,
No power to love, scarce strength enough to hate!
Nay, speak not so, away with such pretence;
Don't tell me of a human sympathy,
It's mockery; it lashes me to bitter mirth.
See, see! I laugh. I will not hear you talk;
Deception rings in every syllable.
I'd rather have to deal with human drone,
Dull, listless as he is, than with the bee
Who scarce can carry all her honey'd load,
Yet bears beneath it all the treach'rous sting.

'Tis not not to worldly heart or worldly tongue
That I appeal, to ease me of my wrongs ;
Such hope has fled, all faith in man is gone.
A hope and faith which never can return.
The pains I have—heaven help me to endure—
The world has wounded, but it cannot cure.

Free as the Lark.

Free as the lark, who is soaring on high,
Free as the frolicsome breeze;
Free as the clouds which skim over the sky,
Free as the unfetter'd seas.
Soaring and blowing, and skimming and heaving,
No care in the future they see;
Live, but rejoicing, never are grieving,
'Tis enough to know they are free.
'Tis thus that I feel, now my bonds are asunder,
Growing lithesome and merry and glad;
That I was so foolish is now my great wonder,
Cupid's slaves must all surely be mad.

On Giving a Child a Box of Bricks.

A HOUSE exposed to many storms unkind,
The beating torrent and the wintry wind;
With no foundation the attacks to stay,
Soon yields its walls and hastens to decay.
Life is a house; of many parts it's made,
Which ne'er unite, unless the mind's well laid;
With Thought, Hope, Charity, and good intent,
And Love, the best and chief of all cement.

Lines on presenting a Blotting Case.

UNLIKE this case, which flauntingly displays
A gaudy outside to the lookers' gaze,
Possessing hidden, what is rude and mean
The more remark'd, the less one likes it seen;
Which, when though age—its beauties gone away
Is doom'd with other rubbish to decay,
May you dear —— care less for outward grace
Than for those beauties time can ne'er efface;
And in years' hence may your life's page unfold
And shew it blotless though it may be old!

The Dying Sailor.

Take me to the sea-girt cliffs,
Where the mighty waters roar;
Let me hear the wild waves beating,
In grand chorus on the shore.

Many years the sea has borne me;
On her bosom I drew breath;
The ocean's been my life's companion,
And shall comfort me in death.

There is a kind and noble nature,
'Neath her rough tumultuous breast,
Those hearts who know the most about her,
Those are they who love her best.

They say that Heaven's a glorious place,
With all the longing soul to please;
But tell me, are there Heavenly oceans,
Are there bright, celestial seas?

Hush! I hear new waters rolling;
Ha! a barque breaks on my gaze;
Heav'nly filled, saintly peopled,
And harps resounding hymns of praise.

A berth is vacant, and He beckons,
The great Captain of the crew;
He invites me—hark! His accents—
"I've prepared this place for you."

John Leech.

There are some men who, dying, leave a bla.
A gap, a void, in the great human rank;
When the grim monster, Death, scorns man's cont
And throws a shadow over ev'ry soul.
Such was John Leech. Maybe his homely name
Will find low standing on the scroll of Fame,
And many men of less desert and worth
Take higher honours in the things of earth;
I never knew the man, that subtle hand
Pourtraying all the soul's conception plann'd;
I never grasp'd—nay, more, upon the face
Nathless so loved where 'twas he made his place,
I never look'd, yet in the deep recess
Of my own heart I knew him none the less.
His soul was in his pencil, and 'twas there
I learned to paint the man himself as fair.
Then, though his body die, and men speak low,
And ev'ry breast beats sympathetic woe,

His earnest labours in men's minds shall live,
And to dense thousands harmless pleasures give.
His fame is in the heart; at each fireside
He had his place, and when they write he died,
May this poor tribute to his worth find room,
"'Twas little of John Leech requir'd a tomb."

England's Detractors.

Ah! England, dost thou hear those taunts
Which some have flung at thee;
They say thy olden spirit's gone
And flown thy chivalry.

They say that Time has sought a spell
A wondrous change has made;
They say thy brilliant deeds are o'er
Thy ev'ry thought is trade!

They say thy warlike days are gone
When thy brave heroes sped,
To win the battle for the weak
Or number with the dead.

But England, thou art silent still!
Thy enemies grow bold;
Hark! what is that they say of thee,
Thou art a slave to Gold!

Will that not rouse thee to retort?
What! still content to hear,
Without so much as one reply?
Oh! England, is this fear?

Methought, that as I question'd thus
A change came o'er the scene,
And heaving billows raged around
Where land had just now been.

Despite the madly beating storm
A barque on boldly came,
Her flag play'd proudly with the winds,
And English was its name.

I saw that vessel hold her course
Heedless of howling blast;
I watch'd her mount the angry waves
'Till from my gaze she passed.

And then I thought on what I'd seen
And the true moral sought,
If England knows her action's just
She cares not what they're thought.

Disappointment.

Another disappointment—one more wreck
Of all the hopes which would my heart bedeck,
The spreading sail lures no propitious breeze
To waft my soul to calmer, deeper seas.
No: 'midst the breakers of the rocky main
She struggles, but to be engulf'd again;
Whilst to the music of the tempest's roar
Despair's voice whispers, that she strive no more.
Begone, thou tempter, shall my own heart hush
The voice Adversity has fail'd to crush?
Or the dread syren, Ease, bid me to stay,
Because the path is black and rough the way?
Shall the aspiring heart cease more to beat
Ambition rest contented with—Defeat?
No! my worst enemy is he who shows
Hopeless my hope, invincible my foes;

Grief's Antidote.

Beats there a heart which is my own,
Where seeds of untold love are sown,
All springing into leaf!
For its sake I would strive to rise,
For its sake smiles should banish sighs,
And bliss spring forth which never dies,
And joy o'ercome my grief.

Oh! all beside for such a heart,
And never more on earth to part,
But leaning on that breast,
Find a soft balm for ev'ry woe,
Sympathy's true comfort know,
Love's mighty power disperse each foe,
And bid my sorrow rest!

On Shakespear.

(Being a portion of a prologue.)

* * * *

But to the point—what is't we want of you,
Why are you here, and what are we to do?
Why is it torpid——deigns to rise
And sends us such a bevy of bright eyes,
Gives us this goodly composite array,
From prattling child to yonder head of grey?
Methinks I'm question'd thus by stranger lip,
Which cannot taste the sweets we natives sip;
By stranger's heart which beats, but cannot know
How warm in English veins the bloodstreams flow,
Nor feel how deep the homage that we claim
Due to the utterance of our Shakespear's name.
There's magic in the word, and England knows
How much to Shakespear's mind the nation owes,

How of the many sons she's given birth,
He stands alone, as one of priceless worth.
What wondrous brain was his; so grand, so wise,
To give plain truth in such poetic guise—
To raise man's mind from only earthly things,
To the desires which higher knowledge brings.

Come in thou maiden—come thou staid old maid,
And yonder man in humble garb array'd;
Come in ye letter'd men, ye men untaught,
And let your wives, your children too, be brought;
Come ye who revel in luxurious prime,
Enjoy the world, and think a tear a crime—
Come in thou misanthrope, whose acrid face
Reads as a satire on the human race;
Come Sorrow's chosen, anxious man of care,
Faithless of hope and victim of despair;
Come rich, come poor, old, young—come all, come each,
And learn the moral genius can teach.

What art was his, to teach him to prepare
A banquet for the mind of such choice fare;
Here temptingly display'd is ev'ry dish
[illegible]stite craves or epicure can wish:

No niggard host is here, exhaustless store,
Drink a full draught, and come again for more!
We'll hold a carnival for Mem'ry dear,
And add our tribute to the worth of Shakespear!

Oh, partial muse, one soul rich harvest yields
To be succeeded by such barren fields,
Thou bidst us gather from one fertile brain
So great a harvest of rich golden grain
As never hast thou given us again!
But oh! forbid it that no lights have shone
Or that the spark of poesy is gone;
Bright stars we've had, their names in history stand,
Lustrous and pure, an honour to their land;
Yet which of these has ever dar'd to claim
An equal share of talent and of fame?
Which tried to wrest the lead, the pride of place,
And gain the victory in the songster's race?
Even as the stars grow dim and fade away
Before the stronger light of opening day,
So these bright spirits love their chief to own
And let the Bard of Avon shine alone!

What can we say? Oh, fickle muse alight
And teach us how to sing his praise to-night;

Teach us our homage at his shrine to pay,
And give us words for what our hearts would say.
Yet what avails it, if she answer this,
What words of ours can equal those of his?
To apply them to himself we are fain,
"The world will never look upon his like again!"

Earthly Bonds.

How oft our weary souls will strive to rise
To better things—than earth can give;
Yet cannot burst the worldly bonds—the ties,
Which seem to strengthen as we live.

We feel the working of some mystic spell,
The grasp of some withstaying power;
A soothing whisper, which we know too well
Gives distance to the dying hour!

It feeds the longing for a lustrous name
So grateful to the ardent mind;
Fires our Ambition with the hope of Fame
And hides Eternity—behind!

Or it may come, with the dull voice of care
That potent agent of our hellish foe!
Wither the heart, by breathing forth Despair,
And drown Heaven's hope in earthly woe!

Or, deck'd with all the syren Pleasure's charm,
Press us to her seductive breast;
Dispel the risings of our dread alarm
And lull us to unhallow'd rest!

Or, flinging to the hungry soul a toy
Nor Time nor Knowledge renders old,
We barter riches for a base alloy,
And sell our hope, our life, for gold.

Awake my soul from lethargy, and seek
The haven ere the storm shall burst,
Hear the loud warning of the cold grave speak,
Nor linger 'till thou'st learn'd the worst!

A Withered Bud.

'Midst the dews of early morning,
Seek the little budding flower;
Watch its beauties, op'ning, dawning,
Promises for future hour.

Note its petals, wid'ning, laughing
Freshen'd by the night of rest;
And the moisture drinking, quaffing,
Which is hung upon its breast.

But a worm has seiz'd it—fasten'd
On the little slender blade;
Ah! how soon its doom has hasten'd,
It was only born to fade.

So it is with life around us,
Buds go with'ring ev'ry day;
Little happy ties which bound us
To the world are broke away.

Ask yon mother whence her fretting,
Why she sorrows, why she sigh'd;
She will tell of bliss too fleeting,
How some op'ning bud has died.

Ask that restless wand'ring stranger,
What disturbs Life's flowing stream;
He will tell how unseen danger,
Broke, dispell'd, some early dream.

Ah, yes! how oft is born a yearning,
Some seed sown, ne'er doom'd to bear;
For there comes a with'ring, burning,
Leaving but a ruin there.

Many germs of bliss will quicken,
But to bring forth sorrow's bloom;
Many hearts will hope to sicken,
In the hastn'ng morrow's gloom.

I knew a little child who gambol'd,
Bright in ev'ry infant grace;
And as he hither, thither, rambled,
Smiles play'd o'er the father's face.

The mother who had borne him, never
Knew the life she'd given birth;
The summons came to loosen, sever,
And her spirit soar'd from earth.

Overwhelming came the trouble,
Tott'ring went the husband's mind;
His joys had burst, like transient bubble,
Leaving but Despair behind.

Yet as days and months went rolling,
Time brought "healing on his wing;"
Always solacing, consoling,
Plucking from that wound the sting.

He never lost the shade of sorrow,
But a new affection came;
And as days brought forth their morrow,
Nature pleaded for her claim.

Looking in the blue eyes playing,
Gems in Beauty's setting cast;
The father's heart went wand'ring, straying,
In the mem'ries of the past.

So months went, and years were length'ning,
With the record of Love's joy;
The tiny limbs were growing, strength'ning
And the infant reach'd the boy.

A little merry soul he carried,
Its echoing smile he wore;
With him Grief seem'd thwarted, parried,
And the father laugh'd once more.

Round about the heart once mourning,
As some forest ivy twin'd,
Grew the love sprays, green, adorning
The blank, desolated mind.

And in spring-like vigour bursting,
Fresh leaves budded ev'ry day;
Hope refresh'd when love went thirsting,
Chasing the black cloud away.

But a frost came, ruthless, cruel,
Withering the health which fed;
Taking from Life's fire the fuel,
And the ivy droop'd his head.

'Twas Death's hand lay heavy, crushing
All the lonely father's pride;
The op'ning rose scarce show'd its blushing,
'Ere it sicken'd—'ere it died.

There was weeping, aye, sore weeping,
Round about the little bier;
Down each cheek went rolling, creeping
The sad witness of a tear.

If a tempest, sweeping, blasting,
Rages o'er a scene once fair;
The ravage is not hopeless, lasting,
As the searings of Despair.

Sorrow o'er one cold face paling,
Stem'd Woe's current, as a weir;
There is a grief, too fierce for wailing,
Too absorbing for a tear.

Then the remnant, earthy, mortal,
In the silent grave was laid;
Clods chok'd up its gaping portal,
For coverlet, the grassy blade.

From the oak tree where 'twas feeding,
Death had torn the ivy spray;
Left the trunk all naked, bleeding,
'Reft of all but its decay.

But one lov'd, one love returning,
Looking o'er the world so wide;
He has gone, and woe is burning,
At the heart where Hope has died.

And beneath the willow weeping,
Where his hand the love flowers strew;
The father's heart, decaying, sleeping,
With his child, lies buried too.

Ambition.

Throbs there a heart content to lay no claim
To dignity, nor pride of place,
A breast ne'er burning with the hope of Fame,
Nor struggling in Ambition's race?

Breathes there a man content to live and die
Without one effort to aspire,
Who yields the palm and lets the rest go by,
Too chill at soul to kindle fire?

Methinks 'tis not Contentment's bidding, this
To never bud one hopeful germ,
To warp desire, and mar the heart's best bliss,
To die—forgotten as a worm!

And yet Ambition is a spark unfann'd
Which lies a giant in a speck,
Which breath'd upon, devours the feeding hand,
And sends the life, the soul, to wreck!

Ah, the Enchanter wields a magic wand,
The soul, the hop'd-for prize, would grasp;
Pass from the present to the space beyond,
And still woo Fame with its last gasp.

Ambition! thou art dang'rous, I scarce know
The virtue of the hand I've press'd,
Whether I clasp a friend or hold a foe,
A joy or sorrow, to my breast!

And still I love thee—oh, 'tis happy hour
When with thy advent grief takes wing;
But I have heard some reptiles have the power
To charm their victims whilst they sting!

Ambition's hope seems borne on ev'ry breeze,
Desire seems pendent in the air,
It flings contempt upon ignoble ease,
And bids me till, while fields will bear!

It whispers how the hast'ning night shall creep
And bring the Death which binds me slave,
When this too eager brain unstrung shall sleep,
Unconscious even of its grave!

Oh, that I could but choose the middle course,
And venturing only to the brink,
Taste the sweet waters, yet not feel a force
Which overwhelms me while I drink.

I would, Ambition, I could bind thee slave
To loose or tie thy bonds at will,
Nor at thy bidding be compell'd to brave
A rapid—where I seek a rill!

There is a freight, too costly and too dear
To offer at Ambition's shrine,
I'd risk the peace, the joys, the all I've here,
But for my future, Lord, 'tis thine!

To the Old Year.

FAREWELL departing year, thy glim'ring light
Burns in Time's socket and expires to-night,
But a brief hour, and thou art call'd to die,
To glide from Being into Memory.
'Tis not that thou hast worn an aspect fair,
'Tis not that thou has shielded me from care
Or bade thy days bring solace on their wing,
That sorrow creeps upon me as I sing!
No: fading year, I turn me to look back
And see a black cloud hov'ring o'er thy track,
Still my soul vibrates with thy tempests throes
And vainly frets her o'er the last year's woes!
And yet I grieve for thee as I might sigh
O'er the last moments of an enemy,
Thinking that had we known each other more
Our ready souls had learn'd to love before!

Oh, waning year, methought thy barren soil
Brought forth but failure for my anxious toil;
Methought that where I'd sown with hopeful care
Thou bid'st Time's fields but fructify despair!
And yet, perhaps I wrong'd thee. Who shall say
That impulse never leads the heart astray?
Who say, man's aspirations must be right,
That he knows alway when to yield or fight?
Maybe, 'twas Mercy's self imposed the check,
Broke my desires, but sav'd my heart from wreck.

There are some souls to whom adversity
Comes as a foe—they dare not fight—they flee;
But there are those who smiling through a tear
Refuse to fly, and scorn to yield to fear.
I've wrestled but to meet defeat, yet feel
With each repulse a renovated zeal;
Each struggle brings me strength—defeat
Shall make the taste of victory more sweet.
Ah, 'tis a war indeed, when restless mind
Battles to rise, yet can't an opening find
Through ranks of Prejudice and Gold combin'd

Ah, failing year, concurrent with thy morn,

Fresh hopes, fresh yearnings struggled to be born,
Hopeful I hail'd thee—and with thy death knell,
Hopeful I bid thee a last, long farewell!

Farewell then, dying year, Time's ready womb
Brings forth another for a kindred doom
As thy last moment totters to the tomb.
In days far hence my soul may turn to thee,
Relive thy hours in grateful ecstasy,
And learn that seeds now sown, but hid their root,
That other years might gather increas'd fruit.
There is a pleasure, with a pang combin'd,
Two contrasts blending in one wav'ring mind,
And as I watch thy last short hour float by
A hopeful smile *will* mingle with my sigh!